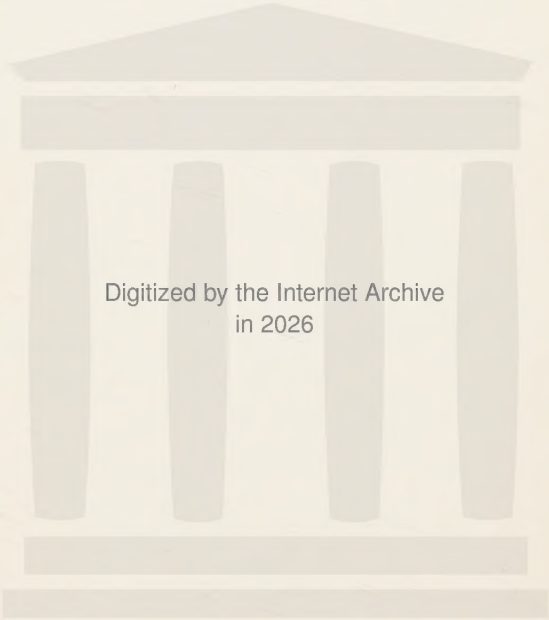
THE INCARNATE SON OF GOD

HENRI DEVRIES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THE INCARNATE SON OF GOD

A Series of Devotional
Studies on the Person
of Christ

By
HENRI DEVRIES

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FOREWORD

This little book contains the subject matter of lectures on Christian doctrine originally delivered to students in three Bible training schools in the City of New York; and the book is published at the urgent and oft-repeated requests of those students who are now serving their Lord either in the Christian ministry at home or in the foreign fields of China, Japan, India, Africa and South America.

The object of the lecturer on any subject is primarily to instruct; to impart systematically sound views on the matter under consideration. And such has been my aim in the writing and delivering of these lectures on Christian doctrine for the last fifteen years, and such it is now in publishing the same. Intellectual knowledge of divine truth is necessary for the spiritual apprehension thereof. The fact that divine truth cannot be fully grasped by the human intellect is no reason why the believer should not with his understanding, enlightened by the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures, seek to penetrate into the beauty of divine truth as much as his limitations allow. For although divine truth is *above* the human reason, yet it is not *unreasonable* nor *contrary* to reason. And it is our experience that the flame of devotion never burns more brightly and steadily than when it is fed with the pure oil of divine truth.

The question regarding the relation of faith to knowledge has been discussed in every period of the history of doctrine. Eminent teachers have held different opinions on this subject. Some have excluded knowledge from the domain of faith. Tertullian held that the believer is perfectly satisfied with faith. He

denied that knowledge had any voice in the matter and indignantly cried out: "What hath Athens to do with Jerusalem, and the Academy with the Church?" On the other hand, St. Anselm nobly confessed that it was through faith that he attained understanding. "I believe," said he, "in order that I may understand." And he was right. It is through faith that we obtain clear and correct knowledge of spiritual things and not the reverse. Mere intellectual knowledge never leads to the apprehension of spiritual truth; without faith this is impossible.

And that was the error of the Gnostics, who created so much disturbance in the early church. Their motto was "*Gnosis above Pistis*," i.e., knowledge above faith. Faith, they taught, was the ladder leading men up to the attainment of knowledge; and after having reached the higher level of the knowing ones, faith could be cast aside. Some of the Scholastics in the Middle Ages held the same doctrine (Scotus, Erigena, Abelard) and so did the Socinians in the sixteenth century and the Rationalists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the present time the same ancient error has reappeared in various forms. What the human reason cannot fathom the heart cannot believe.

And while this is very erroneous, for the reason that the little pitcher of the intellect cannot contain the mighty ocean of the Being and thoughts of God, yet this error holds a grain of truth. The human reason has a right to be heard. Is not God the Author of man's mind? Is not man in this very respect the bearer of the Divine image? Of course we have reference to the believer, whose understanding, formerly darkened by sin, has been renewed and illumined by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and is able to discriminate spiritual things. "The natural man, (i.e., the psychical, the unregenerate man) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know

them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things" (1 Cor. 2:14,15).

Hence the believer has the right to ask of faith as many questions as he pleases. The relation of faith to knowledge is like that of mistress to maid. Mistress Faith has engaged the Maid Knowledge to assist her in apprehending divine truth. Why should not the latter be permitted to inquire into the particulars of the service which she is to render? Faith may not say to the Reason, "I have no need of thee." Van Oosterzee says: "The believer *(pistikos)* as such will and must become a knowing one *(gnostikos)*," or, "A believer, just because he believes, must become one that knows." There comes a time in the life of faith when the believer wants to know the basis and content of his faith. And just because he knows that faith is strong and massive, resting upon the divine foundation of the imperishable Word of God, he is not afraid to subject it to the severest test of intellectual research. Unbelief has never injured the Christian faith, no more than the most destructive criticism of the German and Dutch schools have done the least injury to the Word of God. Heretics and heresies have served a high purpose. Unconsciously they have proven what Melanchton said, that the Bible is an anvil upon which many a hammer has been broken to pieces. And turning to the Scriptures themselves we find that they fully uphold our position. In fact, we took our position from the Scriptures. Paul clearly teaches that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The Lord Himself in all His dealings with men never ignored either the voice of reason or of the natural feelings. "Search the Scriptures," He said, "for they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). We remember the testimony of Luke regarding the Bereans, that they were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they searched the Scriptures

daily whether those things were so (Acts 17:11). John in his first epistle uses the verb "to know" in subjective sense nearly twenty times. Paul uses the still stronger verb "to be persuaded" again and again. The Greek noun *pistis*, faith, is derived from the Greek verb *peitho*, to persuade. And to persuade is an intellectual act inducing one by words to believe.

All of this shows that the Scriptures not only allow the believer intellectually to search out and investigate the grounds and content of his faith, but urge it as an imperative duty: the neglect of it exposes one to grave danger. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," cried out the prophet. If our church people, speaking in general, were more thoroughly rooted and grounded in the knowledge of the Christian doctrine contained in the Scriptures, they could not be so easily beguiled by the un- and anti-Christian isms and vagaries of the day. Much is lost by the lack of that knowledge. Souls not nourished with the pure milk or strong meat of the Scriptures are lean and subject to many infirmities. They not only lack conviction and the joy thereof, but also the power to overcome the evil one with the testimony of Jesus. Their light is like that of a smoking flax instead of the white electric glow of a bulb. And this is cause of sin and failure.

It is cause of rejoicing, therefore, to see how in the present time the Scriptures are being studied more diligently, more scientifically, more spiritually and by a larger number of people, young and old, than ever before. He that thinks that the Bible is out of date, and the salvation whereof it speaks a delusion, an exploded fallacy, would find himself much mistaken if he should visit the various Bible training schools of our land, where young people, men and women, with all of life before them, flock together in ever increasing numbers, year after year, to spend from two to four

years in earnest, diligent study of that old and ever new Bible; and then, after prayerful preparation, go out into the field which is the world and which is white unto the harvest, to preach the gospel to every creature. What earnestness, what devotion and heart-consecration, what spirit of sacrifice and surrender do these young people manifest! With what hunger do they master the contents of the Bible, Old and New Testaments, history and prophecy, doctrines and ethics, as found in the gospels and the epistles, with the auxiliary sciences of church history and history of doctrine, Christian evidences, Biblical introduction, hermeneutics, the sacred languages, etc. The motto of one of these schools is: "The Whole Bible for the Whole World," and they do not go out until they have mastered the Bible—and the Bible has mastered them—and they are perfectly and delightfully at home with the prophets, the gospels and the epistles and the soul-saving doctrines of grace thereof, which they have learned to interpret in the everyday speech of pure and Christ-loving lives.

Such schools are an inspiration to every lover of the Word of God. A visit to them is a spiritual tonic in the strength whereof one may travel many days without weariness. No, life in these institutions is not spiritually over-strained and unnatural, as it has been reported. After several years of close acquaintanceship the writer of these lines feels constrained to say that the very opposite is true. Life among the students is natural. Even romance, in the wholesome sense of the term, is not a stranger within their spacious halls. Many a holy, life-long matrimonial union was begun and consummated there. They worship and sing and pray and labor and sacrifice in the fellowship of the Spirit of Christ; and this is a vital part of their training.

We look to our seminaries to be the leaders in the development and reconstruction of sacred theology, in

order to meet the strenuous demands and exigencies of these critical times, as well as to be the teachers of the various branches of sacred learning and to prepare and send forth ministers and leaders of the denominational churches. We hold in high and affectionate esteem all those among them that honor the Bible as the inspired record of a divine, special revelation, and that are determined, like the holy Apostle, in all their teaching to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified. May the great Head of the Church prosper and bless and enrich them with all spiritual riches in Christ our Lord.

But there is a need among our people and in the world which the seminaries cannot meet. The number of their graduates is insufficient to supply the growing demand of popular teachers of the English Bible, at home and abroad. Our Sunday schools need superintendents able to have oversight of this precious charge of the Church; our city missions need leaders; the churches themselves need assistant pastors and helpers trained for parochial services in the tenement districts and slums of the cities. And, above all, vast and still unoccupied foreign fields cry for pioneers who will not hesitate to obey the call to labor among savages and even cannibals; and if need be, without the backing of well-organized church boards. And all such needed workers our Bible training schools, undenominational and interdenominational, prepare by a training demanded for such work and in such positions. They have been established in the Providence of God for present day needs and emergencies. And so long as the Bible remains their principle text book and study, and in that study to Christ be given the preeminence, He the Center and Circumference of all their faith and knowledge and devotion, I am sure that our Lord will largely use them for the hastening of His coming and His Kingdom in the earth.

I gratefully acknowledge the wonderful assistance derived from the long-continued study of Dr. Abraham Kuyper's theological works. I always find his writings stimulating to the mental and spiritual life. They are a rich gold mine, satisfying the claims of mind and heart. I have frequently quoted him and never without mentioning his name; unless I was not aware of citing him either verbally or in substance. In every other instance of quoting, as far as I know, I have given due credit to the authors.

The lectures whose subject matter fills these pages were delivered the last time to the students of the Missionary Institute at Nyack, New York. The request for their publication by those that attended was so urgent that it could scarcely be resisted. Hence these are the first lectures that appear in print.

No criticism however severe can add to my own conviction of the imperfections which abound in these pages. Dr. Philip Schaff tells us somewhere that his professor of theology, Dr. Julius Muller, owing to his humility and modesty, forbade the publication of any of his valuable manuscripts. This used to appeal to me. I would gladly follow this illustrious example if I did have any valuable manuscripts to publish, which is by no means the case. And yet, after all, if the writers of past and present, great and small, had shared Dr. Muller's sentiment, where would the books be that now fill our libraries and that have enriched the minds and hearts of God's children all over the world? And again, if authors were to delay the publication of their works until they had reached perfection, surely their works would never see the light.

Finally, I owe it to my brother, Rev. John H. DeVries, D.D., here to acknowledge the valuable assistance which he has rendered in reviewing and preparing the manuscript for the press.

–Henri DeVries

INTRODUCTION

Not every one can think as analytically or express his thought as synthetically as the author of this book. Thinking is an art, a difficult art, so difficult that artists—particularly in the province of religion—are comparatively few and far between.

To begin with, there are many who really do no thinking at all. At times, of course, they think they are thinking; but that is a very different thing. The trouble is that the instant a problem offers the least difficulty they begin to pussyfoot like easy-going schoolboys in the presence of an algebraic *x*. And if the problem happens to involve mystery, as all religious problems do, they shut their eyes and behave like raw recruits running from gunfire. It goes without saying, therefore, that they are agnostics. Their opinions, in so far as they have any, are mere impressions, never convictions: for "the Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force." Neither slackers nor quitters get anywhere in religion. It should, however, be the prime concern of every man who really regards himself as better than a sheep to face the fundamental problems of religion and face them until he has either vanquished or been vanquished by them. This is to "quit oneself like a man."

Then there are half-way thinkers who argue to no conclusion. They are like timorous old ladies on the railway who set out for somewhere but never arrive because they lose courage and abandon their journey at the first jumping-off place. These are they of whom it is written, "ever learning, they never come to a knowledge of truth." As a rule, however, this failure to arrive gives them no annoyance; on the contrary, they are usually as boastful as sophomores in college who not only lord it over their fellow students but even

patronize the faculty. They are (themselves being witnesses), the learned, the liberals, the modernists, the progressives; and wisdom will die with them. In their philosophy they are neither yea-men nor nay-men, but the middle-of-the-road men. Their jugglery with words that have an established meaning (such as divinity, inspiration, incarnation, atonement, and resurrection) is startling enough to make honest men lift their eyebrows and Noah Webster turn over in his grave. You may know these shortdistance thinkers by their wind instruments and the cock-feathers in their hats.

But there are thinkers who arrive. When they undertake to solve a difficult problem they think it over and under and round about and clear through. They are, therefore, dogmatists, in the necessity of the case; for when a man believes a thing—that is, when it gets not only into his intellect but into his heart and conscience and will—in other words when it ceases to be an impression and assumes the dimensions and formidableness of a conviction—how can he help standing for it? For example, when a man in the pulpit keeps silence or speaks doubtfully with respect to the incarnation, his people in the pews are safe in concluding that he does not believe in it. Faith is substantial and evidential, being "the *substance* of things hoped for, the *evidence* of things not seen." For this reason the man who really believes does not say "if" or "perhaps" or "peradventure," but "This I know." This is not to say that everything is knowable, but only that every man can know some things and certainly the things that are necessary to salvation. Job confessed that many things were "too wonderful" for him; but of one thing he was sure: "I know that my redeemer liveth!" Paul, while confessing his bewilderment as to the state secrets of heaven, could say with an even voice, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he

is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." This is dogmatism, surely, but it is the warrantable dogmatism of a man who has climbed up out of the misty regions of doubt into a mountain top of vision. And this is possible to any man who has the will to climb. Truth is a temple with an open door, so that whosoever will may enter it. But there is only one door that leads to salvation; and "he that . . . climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." Jesus said, "I am the way . . . no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." He also said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." Christ is the Word; and the Scriptures are the Word; and together they constitute a complete revelation of God. Therefore, to think Christward with the Bible in hand is to find out all that need be known as to God and the life-giving truths which center in Him.

To my mind the author of this book is such a thinker. With Christ as his authoritative teacher and the Bible as his textbook he pursues his quest to a definite conclusion and is able to give a reason for the faith that is in him. He begins with the virgin birth of Jesus; and this is as it should be; for to put an *if* into that story would be like placing a charge of dynamite under the whole Christian system. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" But the foundations are unshaken, and unshakable. Christ, the Rock of Ages, abides the same yesterday, today and forever. He is Alpha and Omega, first, last, midst and all in all.

But this word of mine is merely by way of introduction. From now on the learned author will take charge of the gentle reader and guide him competently through the winding ways of logic to some of the most bewilderingly beautiful and satisfying truths that a loving God has ever revealed to mortal men.

–David James Burrell

CHAPTER 1

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

"Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." This has been the confession of the Christian Church for nearly two millenniums. She has always considered this confession as fundamental. Without it there could not be an incarnation, neither an atonement, for there could not be a Mediator. Without the holy conception and the virgin birth the whole structure of our redemption would be suspended in the air. Hence the subject is of most vital importance; and as such it must be taught, emphasized and apprehended by a living faith for the comfort and edification of the Church and of individual believers. Moreover the prevailing unbelief of the present time regarding this and related doctrines of grace makes this an imperative duty.

The subject is a divine mystery. "Great is the mystery of godliness" exclaims the apostle. "God was manifest in the flesh" (I Tim. 3:16). "It is the mystery of mysteries, the wonder of heaven and earth, each alike astonished at the union of both, the everlasting miracle of divine power and love." It behooves us, therefore, to treat this matter in the spirit of deepest reverence and humble devotion, in worship and adoration of the triune God, whose threefold operation we clearly behold in the mystery. God the Father surrenders His only begotten and well-beloved Son; God the Son empties Himself of His divine glory and majesty and takes upon

Himself the form of a servant; and God the Holy Spirit conceives the human nature of the Mediator in the womb of the virgin.

The apostle declares this to be a mystery; and a mystery it must remain.

Therefore we treat this subject not to explain the mystery, but to bring to our notice such elements of the truth as it has pleased God to deposit in the inspired record which reveals to us the existence of the mystery. And then it will appear that this doctrine which in itself seems incredible, when taken in its connection with the organic whole of the Son's appearance in the flesh, becomes worthy of all acceptation, yea, inwardly necessary and in the highest sense worthy of God.

We speak of this subject under the following heads: 1) the historical record of the fact; 2) its significance; 3) its necessity.

1. The Historical Record of the Fact

The records in this respect are scant although sufficient. Van Oosterzee speaks of an a priori argument. "In the absence of any historical record it would still be highly probable that the Lord Jesus had begun His earthly appearance in an extraordinary way. How can the grape by sheer natural evolution spring from the thistle? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? How can the absolutely holy Jesus spring from the unholy human race, by natural generation?"

Of His supernatural generation Matthew and Luke give us the following narration.[1] In Matthew (1:20-23) the fact of the holy conception is revealed to Joseph by an angel in a dream. In Luke (1:26-35) it is announced by Gabriel to Mary herself and not in a dream. To Joseph the angel says, "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy

Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." And then the evangelist, not the angel, goes on saying, "Now this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Isa. 7:14). From this we learn that the holy conception was foretold 700 years before Christ. Let us look at this wonderful and mysterious prophecy. Humanly speaking, does God take the trouble to predict future events that are small, insignificant, and of no importance? By no means. The fact of its being foretold 700 years before proves to us the vast importance and vital interest of the event.

Let us look at this wonderful and mysterious prophecy in its own historical setting. Ahaz, king of Judah, was in great trouble and all Jerusalem with him. Two hostile forces threaten him and his kingdom from the north. Though his heart and his people's hearts are moved as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind, he does not call upon God, at least the record does not mention it. Nevertheless, the Lord sent His prophet Isaiah unto the king and his people with reassuring words, full of hope and comfort, ending with this exhortation: "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." Apparently neither the king nor his people believed, wherefore the Lord spoke again to Ahaz by Isaiah, the prophet, saying: "Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above." But Ahaz would not ask and piously adds, "Neither will I tempt the Lord." And then the Lord spoke these remarkable words: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14). The word "virgin" *(ha almah)*,

a young unmarried woman of marriageable age, is used in the Old Testament seven times, always denoting an unmarried woman with perhaps one exception–Proverbs 30:19.

The question instantly arises, "To which virgin does this refer?" The prophecy does not speak of *a* virgin in general but a certain, particular virgin. Bengel here remarks: "From the height of divine foreknowledge it (this prophecy) has a singular power of pointing out *her* who is present to the prophet's eye, and is intended." There could be no other virgin. Not *a* virgin, but the one predestined in the eternal counsel to be the mother of the Messiah. It is very probable that Isaiah had in view the woman of whom Micah prophesied (5:2, 3). "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth." M. Henry renders it: "That she, who should bring forth, shall bring forth." Pussey adds: "i.e. until the virgin who shall conceive and bear a son and shall call His name Emmanuel, God with us, shall give birth to Him who shall save them." (*Minor Prophets*, II, 72). M. Henry thinks this to be the most genuine sense of the words. Van Oosterzee advances the same view. Hence Isaiah's positive speech: "Behold *the virgin* shall conceive." In Micah it is: "She who should bring forth."

Let us now turn to the record in Luke. The angel Gabriel, after his salutation to Mary, assuring her that she is blessed among women and has found favor with God, says to her: "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS." Then he goes on describing the greatness and glory of that Son and that of His kingdom, of which

there shall be no end. In verse 34 Mary gives expression to her utter astonishment at this announcement and the impossibility of the event for she is an unmarried young woman. Hence she asks: "How shall this be?" And then the angel mentions both the *agent* and the *mode* of the holy conception, and this is in fact the most comprehensive and clearest statement of this great mystery. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee," i.e., the Holy Ghost shall be the *agent*. "And the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee," i.e., the *manner of operation*. "Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God," i.e., the wonderful *result*.

And this is all that the Gospels contain regarding this great doctrine. True, we find words which seem to allude to this matter; for instance John 1:13, although referring to the regeneration of a sinner, with even greater force applies to the holy conception and birth of Christ, which was "not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Christ Himself alludes to it when He said: "I am from above: ye are of this world." But positive historical records of this fact are scant.

Christ Himself never referred to it. He allowed the Jews to call Him the son of Joseph. Andrew spoke of Him as Jesus of Nazareth. He never corrected them. Why not? This is easily explained. How could He ever allude to a matter so private, profound and sacred? Reverence for His mother's honor forbade Him; moreover, it would have been like casting pearls before swine.

That the matter was known to those more closely associated with Him may be presumed. We quote from Dr. James Orr.

"Joseph and Mary, of course, alone knew the facts fully and intimately. . . . But we cannot stop there. There was at least one other who knew of the facts in

some degree–I mean Mary's kinswoman, Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. You remember that shortly after the Angel's announcement to herself, Mary paid Elizabeth a visit in the hill-country of Judea, when that holy woman was herself six months on the way to motherhood–Mark how all the dates in this narrative are women's dates!–and that Elizabeth in an excess of inspiration–'filled with the Holy Ghost,' the text says–greeted Mary as the blessed among women, and mother of her Lord. (Luke 1:43). She went on: 'Blessed is she that believed, for there shall be a fulfillment of the things which have been spoken to her of the Lord.' Here, then, we have one person who certainly did know that Mary was, by Divine power, to be the mother of Christ; and we cannot doubt that, during the three months that these holy women abode together, the closest confidences would be exchanged between them. Whether Zacharias was admitted to any share in these confidences we cannot tell" (*The Virgin Birth of Christ*, pp. 92, 93).

That the writers of the Epistles were not ignorant of the fact appears from their speaking of Christ as "holy," "without sin," "who knew no sin," "Lamb without blemish and without spot." How could there be such spotless holiness without a holy conception and birth, to which the apostolic writer of the Hebrews surely points when he speaks of Christ as a High Priest Who is "holy, guileless, undefiled, separate from sinners," even in His holy conception? The whole structure of our redemption rests upon this foundation stone. But in Christ's time the people were not prepared to receive such a doctrine. They were first to see, admire, and enjoy the precious fruit before they could appreciate that it sprang from such a holy root.

2. *Its Significance*

Before we speak of the significance of the Holy Spirit's operation in the virgin, let us first consider its significance as a *sign*, for the Lord Himself called it a *sign*. This must be emphasized. It has been much overlooked. To Ahaz the Lord had said, "Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above." From this we learn that the Lord was willing and ready to give a sign most marvelous, either in the high heaven, some portentous heavenly phenomenon, or in the deep valleys surrounding Jerusalem, or in the heart of the earth. A sign so marvelous as to attract the attention of all Jerusalem and of all Judah; a sign so great that no one could deny that it was God's sign of His willingness to deliver them from the threatened danger of their enemies. And now since Ahaz refused to ask for a sign, and the Lord Himself will ordain the same, we may expect a sign even greater, more stupendous, more astounding than Ahaz could ask for; a sign not only for Jerusalem and Judah but *for all the world*. And that sign was, rather is, for it has abiding significance, the miraculous conception of the Messiah. This is God's sign to the human race signifying the divine *power* and *readiness* to save it from all its miseries, and death, and everlasting destruction. By it the Lord proclaims as by a thousand voices in trumpet tones, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." And therefore it must be a sign that no one can mistake. Anything that serves as a sign among men must be easily recognized. An ordinary natural sign could not serve the high divine purpose. It must be of such a nature that it will fix the attention as a thing wholly unheard of, never seen before or thereafter, unique most absolutely—a sign of which no counterfeit ever could appear and whereby the true and only

Messiah should be known and recognized by the whole world, and at all times as the true and only Son of the Father, and yet the Son of Mary, very God and very Man, thus joining the human and the divine nature in the unity of His Person. And such a sign it proved to be. There is but one virgin birth, but one holy conception in all the sacred Scripture, and in all the world, and its history, and never to be repeated. And as such it is God's sign: most impressive, solemn, and full of majesty. God, the great infinite God, Creator of all and the Lord of all things, condescended to give the fallen and rebellious race a sign of His love and power to save it with everlasting salvation.

From this it follows that instead of being of negligible value and importance, this doctrine of the holy conception and birth is of the first magnitude. It is God's sign to the fallen race, and as such it must be taught and preached and upheld and glorified before this unbelieving world. If the resurrection is so great a marvel, being the sign given by the God-Man, the holy conception is greater, more marvelous still, being the sign given by the Triune God. The former is an act of *quickening* the dead body of Christ, the latter a *creative* act "ex nihilo." Just as the first Adam came forth directly from the hand of his Creator, just so the second Adam; with this difference, however, that while the Ego of the first Adam was created after the divine image, in the second Adam it is the very Ego of the person of God the Son. And this, the holy conception of the human nature wherewith the Son of God identified Himself that He might make it the instrument of our redemption, is the sign which the Lord Himself has given to our lost humanity, signifying the eternal love and purpose of God to redeem and save this lost world, the race, and the earth, this whole creation, body and soul with complete and everlasting salvation.

Let us now consider the operation of the Holy Spirit in the immaculate conception of Messiah. Luke contains the fuller statement regarding this operation. His words clearly state, first, the Agent: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee"; second, the manner of this operation: "The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee"; and third, the result: "Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

The Holy Spirit was the Agent. This is in perfect agreement with what the sacred Scripture teaches regarding the various operations of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. We only state the general distinction. "In every work effected by Father, Son and Holy Spirit in common, the power to *bring forth* proceeds from the Father; the power to *arrange* from the Son; the power to *perfect* from the Holy Spirit. As Paul has it, "*From* whom and *by* whom and *to* whom are all things" (*The Work of the Holy Spirit*, p. 20).

"But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things, and we by him" (I Cor. 8:6).

"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen." (Rom. 11:36).

Applying this to the work of the incarnation, its plan, the human germ and materials necessary for the holy conception of the human nature of Messiah proceeded from the Father; the power to construct and arrange these materials according to that plan proceeded from the Son; and the power to call forth that which was contained in the germ, to develop and perfect the same, proceeded from the Holy Spirit. However, all that pertained to the holy conception and birth of Messiah in all its extent and comprehensiveness belongs, properly speaking, to the Triune God. And this

agrees with what Gabriel said to Mary: "The power of the *Highest* shall overshadow thee." The Highest is, of course, the Triune God. By the power of the Triune God which was to overshadow Mary, the Holy Spirit was to conceive in her the human nature of Messiah.

On the same principle the Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier. Sacred Scripture teaches that He is the Chief Worker in all that pertains to the comprehensive operations of sanctification. Part of this is to sanctify, i.e., to set apart persons chosen of God to some holy office or function.

In the counsel of God Mary had been predestined to be the mother of Christ. And now when the fullness of time, also divinely appointed, had come, the Holy Spirit was to sanctify Mary, i.e., to set her apart and all that pertained to her human nature and person, in order that the divine purpose might be fulfilled in her. To some extent therefore this act of the Holy Spirit has an *ethical* character. To this we will refer later. And so we can see *why* the Holy Spirit was the operating Agent in this holy mystery.

"The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee." By this overshadowing of the power of the Highest the human embryo was created in the womb of the virgin. The Lord Jesus had no human father. Joseph was His legal but not His natural father. Between Jesus and Joseph there existed therefore no vital relationship. Jesus was not born of bloods, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.[2] "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven" (I Cor. 15:47).

And this is all that the Scriptures reveal regarding this great mystery. Luke's narrative may give us some information, but it remains a mystery which we may not even endeavor to solve. Here we may not speculate. We may not even find in natural parthenogenesis an

analogy to this miracle. In the presence of this miracle it is highest reason to say: "This I cannot understand." We can only worship and adore the Love marvelous which saves us. The origin of all natural life is unfathomable mystery. Biology can explain something of life when it actually exists but not of its origin. No created eye can ever spy out the workings of the Almighty in His own laboratory. David sings: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eye did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them" (Psa. 139:14-16). And if this truly describes the ordinary operation, how much more does it apply to the supernatural conception and birth of the Messiah.

"He was conceived of the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary." The last clause we consider first. By the overshadowing power of the Highest the conception took place. It was the conception of the *human nature* of Christ. The eternal Son of God could not be conceived and born of the Virgin. When Christ was born in Bethlehem not a new being entered the world. The personality of that new-born babe was that of the eternal Son of God, the Uncreated, the One begotten of the Father from eternity, who now by infinite condescension, made Himself of no reputation, and was made in the likeness of men (Phil. 2:7).

It was the conception of the human nature which was born of Mary. "The days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son." Hence the divine act of conception was followed by the natural course according to the creative

ordinance of God, which culminated at the appointed time in a genuine human birth.

Hence He was Mary's Son, of her own flesh and blood, as Gabriel said to Mary: ". . . that holy thing which shall be born *of thee*"; and as Matthew records in chapter 1 verse 16, "Joseph the husband of Mary, *of whom* was born Jesus, who is called Christ." The Athenasian creed expresses this as follows: "For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God of the substance of the Father begotten before the world and Man of the substance of His Mother, born in time." Christ's human nature was not a new creation in the virgin's womb, thus to shield it from the defilement of inherited sin. Thoughtful believers at all times have been greatly concerned about this important question: "How could the absolutely sinless Jesus be born of a sinful woman, even if she were a virgin." That she was sinful there can be no doubt. From her mother she had inherited, like all other men, the original guilt of Adam, which is the fruitful source of all actual sin. David's confession, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psa. 51:5) applies to Mary, the mother, but not to her Son, our Lord.

The Roman Catholic Church seeks a solution of the difficulty in postulating the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary. But that does not meet the question, only removes it one step. Others, the Mennonites and earlier Baptists, have sought for a solution in the assumption of a new creation in the womb of the virgin. He was conceived by a miracle, and so the formation of His body was a miracle. In His physical being there was not a particle from Mary, not her flesh and blood, not from her human nature which was defiled by sin, but a wholly new creation and therefore absolutely pure and undefiled by the direct operation of the power of God.

"This view was based upon the Apostolic word: 'The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven.' Gradually this view was elaborated and finally formulated in the confession: 'That by a miracle of the Divine Omnipotence a human nature was created in the womb of the virgin of human flesh and blood but apart from the flesh and blood of the virgin and therefore a heavenly origin.'" (Kuyper, *The Incarnation of the Word,* p. 98). This theory was opposed already by Tertullian ("On the Flesh of Christ," Anti-Aicani Fathers, III, 539).

And that is not according to the holy Scriptures which clearly teach that He was born of the Virgin. If not so, then His flesh and blood were not ours, and we are not of His flesh and of His bones. Then it was not our blood which He shed on the cross, and being a strange blood and not our own, how can it atone for our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness? No, this whole presentation is unscriptural, not according to the truth. "Since man partakes of Adam's flesh and blood, so is He also become partaker of the same." "Hence it cannot be too strongly emphasized that the Son of God, walking among men, bore the same nature in which we spend our lives; that His flesh had the same origin as our flesh; that the blood which ran through His veins is the same as our blood, and came to Him as well as to us from the same fountain in Adam. We must feel and confess that in Gethsemane our Saviour agonized in our flesh and blood; that it was our flesh and blood that were nailed to the cross. The blood of reconciliation is taken from the very blood which thirsts after reconciliation" *(The Work of the Holy Spirit,* p. 84).

And so the difficulty remains: How could Jesus Himself be pure and undefiled when the organism of His mother's human nature, body, soul and spirit, was unclean and corrupt? For this is certain that the human

nature which Mary derived from Adam through floods of sin, being assumed by the Son, must have been unclean and defiled *unless* it was *previously cleansed and sanctified.*

Does Scripture give us any light on this problem? We find it in the Angel's statement to Mary (Luke 1:35) ". . . therefore also that *holy* thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." The Angel clearly states that that which shall be born of her, the human nature of Jesus, was to be a *holy* thing.

Just consider this "a holy thing." Job cries out: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" How was it possible that this holy thing come from Mary who *before* the conception was certainly unholy? There can be but one answer, that by the cleansing and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, Mary's human nature, unclean *before*, was cleansed by the Holy Spirit *in* the conception, wherefore that which was born of her was called a holy thing.

"The absolute purity of this birth," says Godet, "results on the one hand from the perfect holiness of the Divine principle which is its efficient cause; on the other, from the absence of every impure emotion in her who becomes the mother under the power of such a principle."

In the Tabernacle every vessel that was to be used in the altar service was to be ceremonially clean (Heb. 9:21). The Spirit of holiness cannot use unclean vessels. Mary was an unclean vessel even as others: there is no difference. How could God use her as she was to become the Messiah's mother unless she was first cleansed? In the holy conception she was cleansed, and therefore the thing born of her was *holy*. Hence, this operation of the Holy Spirit had an ethical character. This is the view of eminent theologians. Calvin's reply to an objection which he calls "silly" offers the same view. The objection is as follows: "If Christ is free

from all sinful defilement and by the mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit was born of Mary, it follows that not the woman's seed, but that of the man alone is impure." Calvin answers: "We do not make Christ free from all defilement because He was born of His mother, but because it (the woman's seed) was sanctified by the Holy Ghost in order that the birth might be holy and incorrupt, as it would have been before the fall of Adam" (*Institutes*, II, 13, 14, from the Dutch edition).

The question, "How does sin find its way to our persons who are conceived and born in sin," finds its answer in the fact that sin attaches to our nature only because that nature is connected with our personal *ego*. It is not my nature that sins, but my person. Hence if Christ had united Himself with a certain human person, that person's ego would have been His and He would have been partaker of human sin, and He never could have been our Mediator. For this reason the Fathers were so careful to emphasize the fact that the Logos assumed not a human person but a human nature which is common to all.

Though in the *conception* of His human nature by the Holy Spirit, the Son of God was apparently passive, in the *incarnation* He was most highly active, yea, He was the Chief Worker. It was the Father who in His great love wherewith He loved the world spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all (Rom. 8:32); it was the Son who made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7) and thus loved us and gave Himself for us (Gal. 2:20). The Babe lay in the manger of Bethlehem wholly unconscious of Himself, just as our babes are without the least consciousness. But the Person in the Babe, the Son of God, was not unconscious. "So we are by no means to say—that in becoming incarnate the Logos had laid aside His self-consciousness, in order to get

it back again only in the gradual course of development of a human soul and that merely in the form of a human self-consciousness'' (Meyer). God the Son never can be unconscious of Himself. There is an unbroken continuity of self-consciousness in the Godhead. The Son of God, though His glory was wholly covered and obscured by His human form, was conscious of Himself every moment of His sojourn in the earth; from the moment of His entrance into human flesh, in suffering, in death, and in the grave, to the moment of His ascending into heaven He was fully conscious of Himself, His state and condition. Dr. Bavinck of the Free University of Amsterdam says, as quoted by Orr: ''He could not be quite passive in the moment of conception as we are: He was sent by the Father unto the world, but He came also Himself with full consciousness and will. . . . He could not be conceived as we are, quite passively, and could not come in this way into existence, but, because He previously existed, His Conception was His own deed. He assumed consciously and freely our human nature.''

Stupendous thought, wonderful incarnation! The Creator took upon Him the form of the creature; the Lord of all appeared in the form of a servant; the Father of eternity began to count His life by days and weeks and years. ''How great the mercy which laid the form of a servant upon the Lord of the world, that the Bread should hunger, strength be made weak, health wounded, and Life to die! What greater mercy than that the Sovereign should become slave, the Redeemer be sold, the Exalter be abased, and the Reviver be slain!'' (St. Augustine).

The Holy Spirit's operation in the conception of our Lord's humanity was very comprehensive. As we have seen He cleansed the human nature of the virgin, and this included the elimination of every evil tendency from that human nature. True, sin is a negation, a loss, a deprivation; its presence signifies the absence of every

spiritual good. But it is more. Very positive are its evil effects. One of these is what Paul calls, "enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). And another, not only indifference but opposition, antipathy against God which if not removed will develop into hatred of God. These evil effects are opposed by the holy disposition of the new nature implanted in regeneration. In Christ they never existed. Their very opposites were found in His holy humanity. He loved God above all and His neighbor as Himself. As in the sinner's heart there is but dissimilarity, so in Him there was perfect similarity with God. God loves enemies; so did His Son Jesus Christ love them, pray and die for them. And all these glorious virtues were not painfully acquired in the struggle of life as with us, but they were inborn from His infancy; they were the work of the Holy Spirit in the conception, so that it was indeed a holy thing which was born of Mary. This holy thing contained in the germ all that is required by holiness and by the complete qualification for His mediatorial work.

And even this did not exhaust the work. Instead of *emptiness* and *poverty* as in us sinful men, the human nature of Christ was wonderfully endowed and adorned with spiritual gifts. What marvelous wisdom do we find in Him; what exquisite tact in His dealings with men; what inexhaustible patience! What perfect equilibrium between justice and mercy! How pure and holy, yet what compassion for the low and fallen! As a Lamb He was led to the slaughter, yet truly He was the Lion of Judah's tribe! And with the germ of all these spiritual gifts, the Holy Spirit endowed His human nature in the holy conception. They were inborn, not afterward acquired. They developed in early life as Luke states it, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (2:52). But how can there be an increase, a development, of things not

previously existing? Hence we believe that the human nature of Christ was so endowed and adorned by the Holy Spirit in His holy conception.

In First Corinthians 12 the apostle speaks of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the *charismata,* to the Church. If the Church was to be so endowed, how much more the Head! Only with this difference, that in the early Church these gifts were imparted to various members of the Body, distributed among the many, not one possessed them all. But Christ did. He who was to be the Head of the Body, still to be redeemed by His blood, must possess them all in order to give them to His Church by His Spirit. He had them in fullest measure for He had the Spirit without measure. In Him there was never a lack of power, of wisdom, of knowledge, of anything required by His mission and work. He had the fullness of the Spirit; He had all His gifts and endowments.

The Heidelberg Catechism (Question 36) says: "What comfort do you derive from the miraculous Conception of the Mediator?" And this is the remarkable answer: "With His innocence and perfect holiness He covereth from the sight of God my sin wherein I was conceived." Not Calvary but the incarnation. Calvary's sacrifice covers and forever removes my actual sins of every day. By His holy conception and birth He covers the sin wherein I was conceived.

3. *Its Necessity*

We call the immaculate conception of our Lord the greatest miracle; greater than the resurrection, and equal only to that of creation. And since God performs miracles only when highest necessity demands it, this greatest miracle implies the highest necessity. And this necessity existed, with reference to God, to the Saviour, and to humanity.

1) *With reference to God.* We are quite scriptural in saying that the divine glory and honor made man's redemption imperative. If the race should perish in its sins, the divine counsel regarding it, its history and final destiny regarding the Kingdom and the Church must utterly fail. And this would mean Satan's triumph. Hence, the glory of God demands that the race be saved. Necessarily salvation must come from without. A Saviour is needed whom fallen humanity cannot bring forth. And so, the holy conception appears as highest necessity with reference to God.

2) *With reference to the Saviour.* We are equally scriptural in saying that the holy conception was highest necessity with reference to the Saviour Himself. If the holy Son of God is to tabernacle in human flesh, then His tabernacle must be worthy of Him. How else could He enter into this most intimate union and identify Himself with the human nature? The very nature and character of the Godhead demanded that it be holy as He is holy, and that means its holy conception. His union with the human nature was intended to be permanent. He was to live and dwell in it all His lifetime on earth and forever in heaven. This fact alone demanded that it be holy, which it could not be without a holy conception. Also, the redemptive work which He was to accomplish must be absolutely perfect in every part and smallest detail, and this necessitated an instrument equally perfect in every part. And since His human nature was to be that instrument, it must be absolutely holy, pure and undefiled in its conception. Again, His human nature, body, soul and spirit is predestined to be a vessel unto honor, an honor and glory the highest in all creation; therefore it must be honorable, i. e., clean, adorned with the beauty of holiness. Satan will come and search Him through and through and find nothing that he can claim as his own; therefore there

must be nothing in Him foreign to holiness; He must be utterly separated from sinners in His conception. If He is to bring to light life and incorruptibility through the gospel (II Tim. 1:10, Gr.), He must *be* incorruptible; and this again requires a holy conception. If to this dying world He is to be the Resurrection and the Life, then He must be able to conquer death and rob Sheol of its victory in rising from the dead. And He was able. "It was not possible," said Peter, "that he should be holden of it (death)." And in the grave He did not see corruption because He was holy, sinless, and *therefore* deathless: hence His *must* have been a holy conception. Just as to us regeneration is wholly necessary to our salvation, so He must be conceived holy in order to be our Saviour.

3) *With reference to humanity.* In saying that the holy conception was an absolute necessity with reference to the race, we have again all the Scripture to sustain our position. The very hopelessness of our estate and condition caused by sin, necessitated this greatest of all miracles. Why is sinful man so utterly unable to save himself? Because in the very root of his being there is a fatal defect which influences all of his moral life and causes it to be unholy and corrupt in the sight of God, if not in his own sight. It is a defect which nothing can remove, which is wholly beyond human control; from the effects of which even the saintliest man or woman can never wholly free himself apart from Christ. If it were possible that one generation, by Christian culture and development, could overcome and cast out outward sin, it would avail the next generation nothing, for the same fatal defect would throw it back into the former hopelessness.

And this disqualification, this fatal defect of the human nature, is *the inherited taint and guilt of original sin.* David, in his heart-broken confession, points to

it as the source of sin: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psa. 51:5). Modernists may ignore or deny it; they may compassionately smile at our backwardness for still believing and teaching what they call "an absurd and long exploded dogma of antiquity"; but then it is stated as a fact in the sacred Scripture and is experienced as such in the universal consciousness of the Christian Church; it is the real source of all human sin, moral corruption and degradation.

And it is this fatal inheritance which disables man from meeting the just and holy demands of his Maker. He lacks moral purity, which is the very essential condition of his salvation. Like a paralytic in a burning building lacks the ability to save himself by flight, or the imprisoned debtor cannot leave the prison because he is poor and has nothing to pay with, so the sinner lacks the power to be holy, which power alone would enable him to meet the demands of his Lord. Therefore he always comes short of the glory of God. He is always conscious of being more or less a failure, never a complete success. Though many have tried hard, and sometimes tried very hard, yet all confess failure. It is the heart-breaking record of the centuries and the cause of floods of repentant tears and of nameless contrite pain and sorrow.

And the mysterious cause of all this lies in our inherited connection with the original sin of Adam, through our own unholy conception. And therefore we say that the holy conception of our Lord is the highest necessity with reference to ourselves, who are sinful men by nature and practice.

By Christ's holy conception a new order of things was divinely inaugurated. Christ was not the continuation of the Adamic race, but He became the Progenitor of a new race. "The first man is of the earth, earthy:

the second man is the Lord from heaven" (I Cor. 15:47). As the first man is the head of those that are earthy, so is the second Man the Head of those that are heavenly. His people are a heavenly people; not born of blood nor of the will of man nor of the will of the flesh, but of God. They have the birth from above. Spiritually, they have a holy conception. As new creations in Christ Jesus, old things having passed away, their disqualification is ended, being displaced by a new and holy nature fully qualified to meet all the demands of their Lord by His own Spirit within them. As they were in the loins of Adam and therefore heirs of his guilt and condemnation, so are they now in the loins of His grace and therefore heirs of His righteousness and of all His merits which are freely accounted to them. The deep ground of all this is found in the holy conception of our Lord.

Finally, there is another ground of necessity which does not lie on the surface. Why is it that we cannot meet our Creator in the *origin* of our being and existence as we believe and expect to meet Him in the *end?* When we endeavor to penetrate into our own personal history, especially into the more remote recollections of our early childhood, our mental vision becomes increasingly dim and shadowy, until a thick veil of darkness prevents us from tracing our beginning to the very origin of our being in our conception. William Wordsworth may touchingly sing:

> "Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God who is our Home.
> Heaven lies about us in our infancy"

and we may love those lines; they contain a beautiful idea, but in our infancy we are not conscious of it. Not

even by the greatest stretch of our fancy can we consciously watch the moment wherein the soul comes from the hand of our Creator. And why not? Why this hiatus, this void when darkness covers the deep in the opening chapter of our being? We believe that sin is the cause. For sin is darkness. Were it not for sin we would find ourselves, at the very starting point of our existence, in the immediate presence of and in fellowship with our Maker. We would be conscious of the inception of our being. And so we would find the gate of entrance to God not before but behind us, not in the unknown future but in the conscious past. "In that holy and tender moment of our conception, sin intruded itself between us and God's father-heart; and now it lies behind us and bars our access to God. It prevents us from looking back, it cuts off the fellowship with God which the heart craves and which it would seek and find within itself. This alone explains why it is that our own inward struggling for light never can lead us to the knowledge of God, but frequently leads either to sinful self-indulgence, or to morbid sadness and despair. And this is the reason why to everyone born in sin there is denied oneness with himself and access to the hidden background of his being. And thus it can be psychologically explained why deliverance can come only by Him who, in His own holy conception identifying us with His own personality, *behind our sin* brings us back to God in our own life's holy genesis" (Kuyper, *Out of the Word*, p. 391).

This brings us face to face with the most important question—whether our Lord inherited the guilt of Adam's original transgression. The Christian Church always believed and confessed that He did not, that the original guilt and stain of Adam's sin could not touch Him owing to His holy conception. Yet there are quite a few in the Church, especially at the present time, that hold that

Christ did indeed inherit our original guilt. Says one quite recently: "If Christ had entered the world in a natural way, He would have had depravity; but through the Virgin Birth He escaped it. (Luke 1:35; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26). However, because of His partaking of our common humanity, Christ inherited guilt and could therefore bear punishment. . . . The guilt which our Lord inherited by birth . . . was primarily the guilt of Adam's sin, the guilt of the first or original transgression." True, the author takes guilt not in the sense of "blameworthiness or depravity," but of "liability to punishment for obligation to make satisfaction for sin." But even in this sense Christ's liability to punishment was not inherited by birth but voluntarily assumed. Moreover, either Christ did inherit original guilt or He did not. There is no middle ground. To assume that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and therefore sinless, and at the same time that "because of His partaking of our common humanity He inherited guilt," is contradictory. His holy conception excludes original guilt. The inherited guilt makes men sinners in the sight of God; this is the fruitful source of the sinfulness of our human nature and all actual sins. We close this chapter with what Dr. Kuyper says in treating this subject: "Every individual sin is not of our own begetting only, but a participation in the common sin, the one mighty sin of the whole race against which the anger of God is kindled. Not only do we partake of this sin by an act of the will as we grow up; it was ours already in the cradle, in our mother's womb—yea, even in our conception. 'Conceived and born in sin' is the awful confession which the Church of God's redeemed can never deny.

"For this reason the Church has always laid such stress upon the doctrine of inherited guilt as declared by St. Paul in Romans 5. Our inherited guilt does not

spring from inherited *sin;* on the contrary, we are conceived and born in sin *because* we stand in *inherited guilt.* Adam's guilt is imputed to all that were in his loins. Adam lived and fell as our natural and federal head. Our moral life stands in root-relation to his moral life. We were *in* him. He carried us in himself. His state determined our state. Hence by the righteous judgment of God his guilt was imputed to all his posterity, for as much as by the will of man, they should successively be born of his loins. By virtue of his inherited guilt we are conceived in sin and born in the participation of sin."

"And now, with reference to the Person of Christ, everything depends upon the question whether the original guilt of Adam was imputed also to the Man Jesus Christ. If so, then, like other men, Christ was conceived and born in sin *by virtue of this original guilt.* Where imputed original guilt is, there must be sinful defilement. But, on the other hand, where it is not, sinful defilement cannot be; hence He that is called holy and harmless must be undefiled. Adam's guilt was not imputed to the Man Jesus Christ. If it were, then He was also conceived and born in sin; then He did not suffer vicariously but for Himself personally; then there can be no blood of reconciliation. If the original guilt of Adam was imputed to Him, then by virtue of His sinful conception and birth He was also subject to death, and condemnation, and He could not have received life but by *regeneration.* Then it also follows that either this Man is Himself in need of a Mediator, or that we, like Him, can enter into life without a Go-between.

"But this whole representation is without foundation, and is to be rejected without qualification. The whole Scripture opposes it. Adam's guilt is imputed to his posterity. But Christ was not a descendant of Adam. He existed before Adam. He was not born passively

as we, but Himself took upon Him the human flesh. He does not stand under Adam as His head, but is Himself a New Head, having others under Him of whom He saith: 'Behold Me and the children whom Thou hast given Me' (Heb. 2:13). Moreover, realizing that the Son did not assume a human *person*, but a human *nature*, so that His Ego is that of the Person of the Son of God, it necessarily follows that Jesus cannot be a descendant of Adam; hence the imputation of Adam's guilt to Christ would annihilate the Divine Person. Such imputation is utterly out of the question. To Him nothing is imputed. The sins He bore He took upon Himself voluntarily, vicariously, as our High Priest and Mediator'' (*The Work of the Holy Spirit*, pp. 86 ff.).

CHAPTER 2

THE ABSOLUTE SINLESSNESS OF THE LORD JESUS

The absolute sinlessness of our Lord is the great moral miracle of human history. It is the never ceasing wonder of the ages. For four millenniums men had entered the world and left it again sinners by nature and practice. Some were greater sinners than others, some greater saints than others, and some had attained singular heights of moral excellency, but there was not one without sin. And, after Christ, for another two millenniums the same record obtains, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." ALL, absolutely *all;* except the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour, who was without sin. He alone, spotlessly, dazzlingly white, among the innumerable throngs that were black. He the only One that was *whole* and *wholly alive* among the mass of humanity hopelessly diseased and dying. He dared challenge His bitter foes, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" And His challenge is still ringing across the ages without response. His enemies of every age have without exception admitted, admired, and honored His absolute sinlessness. Even when He was accused, "We cannot think of a single accusation that does not redound to His credit" (Fisher). Can there be anything in the universe exciting greater wonder than this? If there were a village, a city, or smallest hamlet without a graveyard, without an undertaker or a grave-digger because in that locality death had never been heard of, what cause of world-wide wonder would

there be? Just so the wonder of the sinlessness of Jesus our Lord. He was absolutely without death because in Him there was no sin. A deathless Christ, because He was a sinless Christ. Immortal not only, but incorrupt and incorruptible.

How can we account for this marvel of His absolute sinlessness? In His sinlessness there is not only an abounding exercise of every form of moral goodness, and a complete absence of anything suggestive of the opposite, but there is also an inexistence of the frailties which are apt to form the dividing line between virtue and vice. Though He is the greatest Sufferer, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," yet He never seeks to excite our pity. He suffers lack but never complains. He is misunderstood yet never resents it, nor even seeks for any self-justification. In His character we find the womanly, but always evenly balanced with the manly. There is nothing sentimental about Him. Is He then a Stoic? No more than He is an Epicurean; yet His enemies called Him a glutton and a wine bibber. And even in this accusation there is a suggestion of sociability, of His being a guest whose presence would grace any festive board as at Cana's wedding, for instance. We have a little word picture of His daily life in the word of Paul, inspired by His Spirit: "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15). Though in His grief He asks for no pity, yet in the supreme sorrow of His life in Gethsemane we hear the cry for sympathy in that pathetic "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" The three disciples whom He had taken along for company could have prayed with Him; jointly they could have met the powers of darkness that assailed Him in that hour; but they did not. And He felt the lack of sympathy, showing that He desired and would have appreciated it.

To describe our Lord's sinlessness seems an

impossible task. The total absence of an evil self, with all its unholy stirrings, motions and tendencies, with all its subtle, almost imperceptible self-manifestations, we cannot picture to ourselves. It would require a stretch of our imagination beyond our powers. We have never witnessed it; how can it be described? How can that which lies beyond the range of human experience be described? Such absence of an evil self would seem to be unnatural, not quite human. Upon the discovery of some slight fault in a saintly person we have heard it expressed, and that with apparent satisfaction on the part of the critic, "After all, he is only human." Yes, in that sense even the splendid Paul and the beloved disciples John were after all quite human. But Christ? After this standard He was not human at all. He was super-human! "He is altogether above us," it is said, "we can never attain His exalted standard, neither is it practical in this imperfect, matter-of-fact world." And so the sinlessness of our Lord is dismissed and with His sinlessness His true humanity, for a true man is a holy man.

However, though with our natural eye we have never seen a sinless man, with the eye of faith we do see Jesus. We have His photograph in the gospel, His likeness drawn in the infallible light of divine truth. And men have studied that picture for two thousand years; they have applied the microscope of the most critical research. Friends and foes alike have analyzed His every word, look and act, only to find that there is no fault in Him. We repeat: "We cannot think of a single accusation that does not redound to His honor." If there were anything in some secret spot not absolutely holy, would not His enemies have discovered it? If Satan had found something in Christ which he could claim as his own, would he not have it proclaimed from the housetop? What shouts of unholy mirth and laughter

would such discovery have raised from the camp of His enemies; how completely would it have defeated the very end which He came to accomplish! But the discovery is yet to be made. Covertly Christ put them on the scent of some such discovery. He said to the Jews: "He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him" (John 7:18). Did the sin-blinded Jews ever think that to seek their own glory as they always did, was unrighteous? Jesus told them that it is. And then He hands them a test wherewith, as it were, He invites them to test Him. And they certainly did, but only to find that He is indeed righteous. In that marvelous challenge, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" He does not merely mean "error," but actual sin, something amiss in His moral conduct. And the Jews understood it so, but there was no response to the challenge. Godet remarks: "The perfect holiness of Christ is proved in this passage not by the silence of the Jews, who might very well have ignored the sins of their interlocutor, but by the assurance with which Jesus lays this question before them. Without the immediate consciousness which Jesus had of the perfect purity of His life, and on the supposition that He was only a more holy man than other men, a moral sense so delicate as that which such a state would imply would have suffered the least stain to pass unnoticed, either in His life or in His heart; and what hypocrisy would there not have been in this case in addressing to others a question with the aim of causing them to give it a different answer from that which in His inmost heart He gave Himself. In other terms: to give a false proof whose want of soundness He hopes that no one will be able to prove."

Either–and we say it reverently–our Lord was what He claimed to be, the God-Man our Saviour, or, He was

a deceiver and a hypocrite. There is no possible middle ground. And since the Jews, the bitterest of His foes, were the only ones in all history, as far as we know, who called Him, "that deceiver" (Matt. 17:63), we say with the man born blind and healed: "If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." And today He is redeeming His people and renewing the face of the earth.

But how can we account for this marvel, His absolute sinlessness? Nothing can account for this marvel but the holy conception. If we reject this, then we must remain content–but never satisfied–with the insoluble puzzle of His sinlessness. There is no other solution possible. True, the doctrine of the holy conception still leaves us with a mystery, but it is of a different nature from that of His sinlessness. That the Divine Omnipotence could create the human embryo in the womb of the virgin and perform all that belonged to the holy conception we accept as we do the miracle of the creation of heaven and earth. We do not comprehend it, but we do comprehend that we cannot comprehend; and therefore we believe, which is the more rational. To believe that God created all that exists is perfectly rational, for it assigns an adequate cause to a most marvelous effect. But the miracle of His sinlessness is of a different nature. Here we have the puzzle posited by Job: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one" (Job 14:4). Such a thing according to Job is not only impossible but irrational. Nothing can yield what it does not contain; and every effect must have an adequate cause. Here we have an unholy woman the mother of an absolutely holy child; a tremendous effect without any cause whatever. But, accept the solution of the gospel, and you discover a most adequate and satisfactory cause for this incomprehensible fact.

Let us state then the solution as the gospel offers it.

First, there is the comprehensive fact itself of the holy conception of our Lord. Being separate from sinners, in that act of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was not the Son of Joseph and therefore not the Son of Adam, at least not directly. His mother was a daughter of Adam. But by this act of the Holy Spirit He was cut off from the fatal inheritance of original *guilt*. The unclean fountain-head of our being never touched Him. There was no corrupt root; how then could there be any corrupt fruit?

Second, our Lord in the incarnation did not assume a human person but a human nature–a fact which precluded sin altogether, as we shall see in another chapter.

Third, the sanctification of Mary's human nature in the conception prevented the stain, the actual defilement of sin, to reach Jesus.

Fourth, the total absence of every evil tendency, propensity and the like from Jesus' human nature, together with the actual presence of every holy disposition and qualification produced in Him absolute holiness.

Fifth, the glorious enrichment and adorning of His human nature with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, completed the work which resulted in the absolute sinlessness of our Lord.

It has been argued that after all, His holy conception notwithstanding, the sinlessness of Jesus cannot have been real. There must have been some trace of sin in His character, for is not sin transmitted *with the blood?* When the growing lad exhibits his father's ugly temper it is frequently said. "You cannot blame him, for it is in the blood." And if this be so how could the Lord Jesus be holy, since He derived His humanity from His mother? He had no human father but He had a human mother. And it was certainly her blood which coursed through His veins. How then could He escape the sinful defilement of that blood?

The answer is given already in the statement that Mary's sinful nature was cleansed by the Holy Spirit in the holy conception; and so Christ could not derive any moral defilement from His mother's blood. But apart from that, we ask: Is our sinful nature transmitted from parents to children *with the blood?* Let us examine this matter. Blood is *material.* It may transmit material bacteria, germs of disease which may bring hopeless misery to the still unborn life. But is sin material, so that it can be transmitted with the material blood? Is there anything material about sin? Did chemistry or biology ever discover its germ? This was the heresy of Manes of the fourth century. He taught that sin proceeded from Satan and Satan was matter, matter was Satan. Of course if that be so, then sin is of a material nature. Hence he called the material body, flesh and blood, "*the seat of sin.*" "Get rid of the excitement of the blood by mortifying your body. Avoid all animal food, deny the body its cravings and demands and gradually your soul will become pure and sinless. Real sanctification consists chiefly in the mortification of the body," etc. The same error was revived in the nineteenth century. A vicious boy should have an operation performed upon his brain and he will be normal and virtuous. It is the brain or the blood which contains the germ of sin. Not conversion and sanctification but a healthy body and pure blood, a vegetable diet, gymnastics and uplifting eugenics, well understood and universally applied, will give the world generations of pure and virtuous men and women.

But this whole reasoning is anti-scriptural. Scripture has much to say about blood, but it never says that it is the seat of sin. True, the soul is in the blood; the blood is therefore the vehicle of the soul. And it is here where the spiritual touches and unites with the physical. How, we cannot tell; that is a problem which

no man can solve. But this we know, that sin is *not* material. That would make God its Author, for there is no matter which God has not created. And in Him is no darkness at all. Sin, not being material, cannot be transmitted with the blood. This is pure Manicheism, as we have seen. The sacred Scripture teaches that sin finds its seat in the human heart. Its teaching in this, as in all other respects, is very positive. "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21). "Create in me a clean heart, O God," prays David (Psa. 51:10). Christ declares that from within, from the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, etc. (Mark 7:21). Hence sin is purely spiritual. It originated with Satan and Satan is a spirit; he has no body. Sin affects the body and the sinner makes his members members of unrighteousness; but that does not make sin material. Sin is essentially spiritual. It must be fought and conquered by the divinely ordained means; and they are only spiritual. There are sins of the body, if we may call them so, such as drunkenness and uncleanness, and sins of the soul, such as pride, hatred, and envy, but in the doing of these sins it is neither the body that sins nor the soul, but the person, the Ego, and that is spiritual.

In closing, we affirm that sin is loss. It robs man of that which is essential to his complete humanity, i.e., the all-pervading and penetrating presence of the Holy Spirit. We have lost our completeness because by sin we have lost the conscious presence and fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The only true and complete man that ever lived in this world after the Fall was the Man Jesus Christ. Because He had the Holy Spirit He was a complete Man. His sinlessness without the Holy Spirit is impossible. He is the Spirit of holiness, even in Christ, as well as in us. And since the Holy Spirit was ever shedding abroad in His heart the love of God, therefore He loved God with all His heart and His neighbor as Himself,

and therefore He was most truly and superlatively human. Of His lovableness, beauty, grandeur and attractiveness we have no conception. Scripture speaks of Him as Chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely. And the promise and prospect is that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (I John 3:2).

CHAPTER 3

THE IMPECCABILITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

We have come to the study of our Lord's impeccability, i.e., His inability to sin. We say it reverently and from deepest conviction and to the honor of His most holy name, that our Lord *could not sin.* The opposite statement affects us like an insult to His Holy Person, and can be the result only of a lack of scriptural discernment. And yet, earnest and spiritually-minded Christians, ministers and laymen, have maintained and vigorously defended this opinion.

Hence, here especially, we must be guided by the analogy of faith. The Scripture is rich in positive statements regarding our Lord's absolute sinlessness, but it contains no direct declaration as to His inability to sin. "It is human to err," it is said, "and since Christ was perfectly human, surely He could err and sin, even if He never did. And if He could not, then He was not human as we are, but superhuman. And a superhuman cannot enter into our feelings and conditions and correctly know and understand us. Moreover He was tempted. And why should He be tempted if He could not yield to the temptation? Then the temptation lacked reality. How can He sympathize with us to whom the temptations day by day are so intensely real?"

All this shows how important and practical the subject is.

The subject is not new. It has occupied the minds of many thoughtful Christians of all time; and it is

interesting to see how some of the profoundest thinkers of ancient and modern times have, in this respect, reached the same conclusion. Let us introduce Origen, that remarkable Christian teacher of Alexandria in the early half of the third century, who was a theologian, a philosopher, a confessor and near-martyr for the faith. In his discussion of the incarnation and in speaking of the human soul of Christ he says: "That the nature of His soul was the same as that of all others cannot be doubted, otherwise it could not be called a soul were it not truly one. But since the power of choosing evil is within the reach of all, this soul which belonged to Christ elected to love righteousness, so that in proportion to the immensity of its love it clung to it unchangeably and inseparably, so that firmness of purpose and immensity of affection and an inextinguishable warmth of love, destroyed all susceptibility for alteration and change; and that which formerly depended upon the will was changed by the power of long custom into nature, and so we must believe that there existed in Christ a human and rational soul without supposing that it had any feeling or possibility of sin." And then in a long passage on the same subject, immediately following, he illustrates this peculiarity of the soul of Christ as a result from its most intimate union with the divine Logos by whose holiness it was interpenetrated as red hot iron is by fire, so that sin to Him was an impossibility *(De Proncipii)*.

From the above we see that Origen referred Christ's holiness to His human soul in union with the divine nature of the Word. Tertullian refers it to His divinity, for he says: "God alone is without sin; and the only man without sin is Christ, since Christ is also God" ("Treatise on the Soul," *Anti-Nicene Fathers*, III, 221).

"St. Anselm," quotes Bishop Moule, "points out, to say, 'God' or 'Christ cannot sin' is a phrase not of

impotency but of potency. It expresses the utter inability of temptation to deflect the nature and will."

Schleiermacher in speaking of Christ says: "Christ was different from all other men in virtue of His essential sinlessness and His absolute perfection. His sinlessness is described as essential because its ground is in the conjunction of the divine and human in His personality. We can only say of Him, *potuit non peccare* when we combine the statement with the other formula *non potuit peccare*, i.e., He was able not to sin only because He could not sin (Selbie, *Schleiermacher*, p. 122).

Says Bishop Moule, "Not for one moment did sin enter the human field of His being. In the highest sense He was incapable of sin, not physically, (for every physical faculty and limit which in us, as men is an avenue for temptation, and ministers to the sinning spirit, was in Him) but morally and spiritually. *In this aspect* His position is expressed by "ability not to sin" *posse non peccare*, rather than inability to sin *non posse peccare*.

"Yet, from another point, the *ultimate* truth is *non posse peccare*. The manhood of Christ is to be studied not in the abstract but in its actual, absolute, necessary harmony with His Deity, under His divine personality. Had the manhood sinned, the Christ would have sinned in His manhood, the highest moral impossibility.

"In this subject, we are reduced to the acceptance of revealed phenomena as yet, at least, imperfectly harmonized to our thought. Our blessed Lord was really tempted. Our blessed Lord could not sin" *(Outlines of Christian Doctrine*, p. 63).

Dr. Abraham Kuyper treats this subject at some length and says: "The Ego of Jesus which said: 'I am a man who told you the truth' is the ego of the Son of

God and this made the transition and inception of sin impossible. Therefore all such teaching which makes the reality of His temptations to depend upon His ability to sin is wholly unworthy of credit." And again: "To speak of sin, with reference to the Son of God is the same as to speak of holy sin or sinful holiness. This thing itself is wholly unthinkable. And he that teaches that Christ could sin, even though actually He did not sin, denies His Deity" (*E. Voto Dodr.*, I, 381, 384).

And finally we quote Professor E. Laurence who writes: "To say that He was able not to sin (*potuit non peccare*) and did not, is an inadequate statement. It is no more than was true of Adam before the fall. It expresses only the human side of His character. But taking into account the Divine, as the dominating force, a moral inability to sin is essential to the whole truth. *Non potuit peccare*. We may say He was able to sin if He willed to, but considering that His whole moral being was strongly set against it, and that it was the purpose of God to destroy sin through sinlessness in Him, we are obliged to say, in justice to His divine-human Person, He could not will to sin. Yet not by physical restraint or force, but in the freedom of His holy nature and in the bias of His whole being toward God. The inner man, impelled by a free, divine-human impulse in spotless purity and perfect self harmony, the affection with the appetites, the imagination with the reason, the will with the understanding."

These quotations furnish us with the unanimous testimony of trustworthy Christian scholars and teachers concerning Christ's inability to sin. Let us now carefully and reverently examine the ground upon which this truth is founded.

While Christ's absolute *sinlessness* was a direct result of His holy conception, wherein He was wholly separate from sinners and therefore wholly excluded

from inherited sin, His *inability* to sin was not the effect of His holy conception. The first Adam too had a holy origin, he too came from the hand of his Maker a holy human being. Yet he sinned, he fell and thereby proved his ability to sin. On this ground therefore we cannot say that the Last Adam was impeccable. The deep ground of this fact must be looked for elsewhere, namely in our Lord's union with the Son of God, a union which is organic and therefore most intimate and indissoluble. Paul says: "In him (i.e., in Christ) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:8,9). He is the God-Man and as to His holiness, it was divine-human. His holiness was human undoubtedly, we thank God for that, for a human holiness we need. But His holiness was also divine and that as a poor, sinful race we need just as much. *And it is on the organic union of these two that Christ's inability to sin was founded.* Whatever may be said of the *divine* holiness, excepting its infinitude, applies to the *human* which was a clear reflection of the divine.

Let us for the better understanding of this great subject dwell for a moment upon each, the divine holiness and the human holiness and enter their full meaning and reality.

The Divine Holiness

"God cannot sin. The predicate which affirms the impossibility of sinning can be applied to God alone. Of Him it is true in the absolute necessity of His nature – a necessity which is identical with the highest liberty. The idea of a God who could sin or who could be really tempted to sin were an absurdity: God and sin are two conceptions which absolutely exclude each other." (*Human Sinlessness of Jesus*). Wherefore James saith: "God cannot be tempted with evil."

What is the divine holiness? It is revealed to us, a *sinful* race, as the Divine Essence in ceaseless war against sin, a consuming fire which shall devour the adversaries. The holiness of God arrays the whole undivided Divine Essence in deadly hatred against sin and Satan. It is the powerful concentration of all the divine perfections into one focus and that focus directed upon sin in order to judge, to condemn and to consume it. All there is of God, His Triune Being, all His attributes, all His perfections, the sum total of His Divine Being utterly separate from and antagonistic to sin, behold, that is the divine holiness.

Before the appearance of sin the divine holiness was just as pronounced, but not more so, than any other divine perfection. It was the unapproachable light but without the dark background of sin. Sin affects the divine holiness as darkness affects the light; it makes it brighter and more dazzling. It was after sin's appearance in this world that the divine holiness has been revealed so prominently; in fact, of all the other divine perfections except love, it has become the most prominent. No other perfection has been exalted as His holiness. None is sounded out so loftily with such solemnity and so frequently by angels that stand before His throne as this. Where do you find any other attribute trebled in the praise of it, as this? "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Sabaoth: the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isa. 6:3). And the four living-ones rest not day and night saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty" (Rev. 4:8). His holiness is His glory, and His glory manifests His holiness. Yet in Isaiah 6:3 it could not be said: "The whole earth is full of His holiness." Yea, God Himself selects His holiness to swear by: "Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David" (Psa. 89:35). And again in Amos, "The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness," He lays here His holiness to pledge

for the assurance of His promise, as the attribute most dear to Him, most valued to Him, as though no other could give assurance parallel to it in the concern of an everlasting salvation, which is here spoken of. God having no greater than Himself to swear by swears by Himself, and swearing by His holiness seems to make that single one equal to all His other attributes.

And this prominence is explained by the fact that the revelation of the divine holiness comes to a race living in the midst of God's warfare with sin. His holiness indicates the divine attitude toward sin. And that attitude is one of absolute hatred of sin, absolute hostility against sin, absolute apartness from sin; and it is this negative apartness from sin which marks all the revelation of the divine holiness. The idea is emphasized throughout both Old and New Testaments. It was the main principle underlying the Levitical ritual as well as the holy conception of our Lord whose absolute apartness from sin is emphatically declared by the holy apostle (Heb. 7:26). This is of vital, fundamental importance which must be thoroughly understood, for it is the basic idea of the divine holiness.

The Old Testament term which denotes this aspect of the divine holiness is *kadosh*, i.e., the Holy One, He that is separate. Says Oehler (*Old Testament Theology*, p. 105), "*Kadosh* must be referred to the fundamental meaning 'separate' from which the more specific meaning 'pure' could be derived. When *Kadosh* is the designation of a divine attribute, there evidently lies in it, primarily a negative element, by which it designates a state of apartness, God raising Himself up above others." The significance of this term is described by Bengel, as quoted by Oehler, as "*inexhaustible*." The original holiness of God, the derived holiness of men and angels, the acts of sanctification both objective and subjective,

are denoted by the one word *kadosh* in the Hebrew, and *hagios* in the Greek, both meaning separate, set apart. This is the word chosen by the Holy Spirit to set forth this glorious attribute of the Divine Essence. God is absolutely separate from anything that savors of sin. In Him there is no darkness at all. Between Him and sin, as between heaven and hell, there is an unfathomable gulf fixed that can never be bridged. The only defense, the only refuge in all the wide universe, the only salvation from the danger, the contamination and destruction of sin is God, for God is holy, opposed to sin, in deadly hatred to sin, warring against it until it shall lie defeated, crushed under His final judgment, in deepest hell for ever.

And all the kingdom of God glories in this fact. The angels have no higher ascription of glory than "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts!" And the four living-ones, representing the glorified Church, join the angels, singing, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name for Thou only art holy (Rev. 15:4). In all the Scriptures God indignantly repudiates the charge of having anything to do with sin. "God is not a man, that he should lie" (Numbers 23:19). "The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent" (I Sam. 15:29). "The Lord is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him" (Psa. 92:15). "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity" (Deut. 32:4). "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13). "Far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity" (Job 34:10).

In each of these, the divine holiness is spoken of from the *negative* aspect; it is always the divine separateness from sin; it is always the Divine Essence

opposing sin, frowning upon sin, in deadly enmity against sin, yea so hating, so loathing it that rather than to let it go unpunished He hath punished the same in His beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

This fundamental idea of apartness from sin indicates that holiness *cannot be the result of moral conflict.* Conflict with what? With sin? Holiness is absolute apartness from sin. It has nothing in common with sin. Certainly, God has been in conflict with sin ever since Satan fell, but in that conflict the divine holiness did not develop from a lower degree to one higher and highest. It was the very holiness of God which *declared war against Satan,* just as when in Paradise He said: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman" (Gen. 3:15). Long before the existence of Satan God was holy. His holiness is as eternal as Himself. It is an essential quality of His being, and the basis of His unity and uniqueness. In Isaiah He says: "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One" (Isa. 40:25).

In its *positive* aspect, on the other hand, holiness refers to the absolute purity of the Divine Essence and the divine love of that purity. Just as He hates iniquity with absolute hatred, so He loves purity, which is holiness, with all the burning passion of infinite love. And such is the holiness of the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is the holiness of the Son not less than of the Father. It is the holiness of the Divine Essence. Let us say it reverently. The Divine Persons do not share the Divine Essence as though the same were divisible, but each possesses it in its wholeness and completeness. Hence, the Son of God possesses all the divine, holy Essence. And in the incarnation He brought this selfsame divine, holy Essence into the closest intimacy of organic, indissoluble union with our human nature.

And by this union the divine nature was not at all affected. It remained what it had been from eternity, unchanged and unchangeable. Hence, if the Son of God could not sin before the incarnation, (we speak reverently) how could He sin after it? And that is precisely the thing affirmed if we accept the possibility of sinning in our Lord. Human nature by itself does not sin. Neither the soul nor the body alone does commit sin. That which sins is the human Ego. Sin is always the result of human choice and neither the physical nor the spiritual nature by itself has the power of choice, apart from human Ego. In Christ the acting subject is without exception, in all His holy choices and acts, the personal Ego of the Son of God. How then can such possibility be ascribed to Him?

The Human Holiness of our Lord

Let us now consider the *human* holiness of our Lord apart from the divine, and that only in order to assist the limitations of our human mind which can fix its attention exclusively upon one object only.

In His human holiness we find this striking feature which is identically the same in His divine holiness, viz., His absolute apartness from sin. In His inmost human nature He stood utterly aloof from sin. He could deal with sinners, live with them, love them without the slightest danger of being defiled thereby, because of the inward apartness from sin. This separateness was a gulf fixed between Himself and sin. It constituted His perfect wholeness of soul which enabled Him to touch and handle the moral leprosy of sin with impunity. He could and did live with these lepers, eat and breathe with them the same atmosphere, love them with a compassion which at times must have been overwhelming, and yet inwardly be completely separate from them and

their sins. This inward separateness was an invisible coat of mail which made Him invincible. And this being so, how then could His human holiness be a moral development achieved by the inward conflict of His soul? In this respect there were no conflicting elements in His soul. His soul is one even as God is One. In the holy God there can be no inward conflict, neither in the holy man Jesus.

Another striking feature in His human holiness is the tremendous energy of His sensitive soul wherewith He loves God and hates sin.

It was the Messiah who testified in Psalm 139:21, 22: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies." And this He proved to be a living reality all the days of His earthly existence. While He loved sinners to the death, yea, the death of the cross, He hated sin. And hatred is the reverse of love. The measure of His love of God is the measure of His hatred of sin. The man Jesus hated Satan as He loved God with all His heart and soul and mind and strength. To our Lord sin and Satan are identical. *There can be no moral evil, which is a moral quality, without a moral agent* to whom it belongs. This is equally true of all moral goodness. Hence sin means Satan. And Christ loathed Satan. It was the express purpose of His mission to bruise his head and to destroy his works. And this He did with a zeal, with a gladness of heart and exaltation of spirit that we cannot estimate. The joy of doing this was to Him the wine of life. It was His meat and drink, for this was the work the Father had sent Him forth to accomplish. He meant to rid the world of Satan, cost what it may. It would take His life. Very well, "the prince of this world, cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John 14:30). And Satan did come and by wicked

hands of Jew and Roman he nailed Him to the cross; and by every conceivable temptation he tempted Him, but however narrowly he scrutinized His soul, he could not find the minutest atom of any resemblance to himself. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" is the conclusive testimony of His own Messianic and personal consciousness worthy of all acceptation.

Such was the moral, unalterable attitude of the human soul in Christ. There was never a moment in which He relaxed this attitude toward sin. There was in Christ a moral soul-sensitiveness which at the slightest approach of even the shadow of moral evil rang the alarm by affecting His soul with keenest pain. No sooner did Peter articulate the tempting words: "Lord, this shall not be unto thee" than with the swiftness of lightning He struck at the enemy, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matt. 16:23).

If such then were the moral attitude of His human soul, is it psychological, is it reasonable for a moment to assume the possibility that Christ could sin? We said a moment ago that hatred is the reverse of love. And that is so even in Satan. Satan loves himself most intensely and with the same intensity he hates God and Christ and all that belong to Christ. Satan loves himself even as God loves Himself, but with this difference—while Satan's self-love is finite, God's love is infinite. With infinite affection God loves His own infinite Being and all finite things which He has created. Satan has created nothing; therefore he loves nothing but himself and hates everything outside himself because it is God's creation. This being the moral attitude of Satan, that master spirit of evil, can you for a moment conceive that Satan could so prevail upon himself as to perform one holy act? So completely reverse the action of his

satanic nature and satanic ego as to do one thing to please God? Impossible! Even so could our blessed Lord Jesus not prevail upon Himself to do anything to displease God and please Satan.

Consider for a moment what this assumed possibility implies. To the Jews He said: "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John 8:34). To affirm that Christ could sin is to affirm that He could become a sinner, and so become a servant of sin. The thought makes one shudder. The angel said to Mary: "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Can He Himself possibly become a sinner?

Sin may be a thoughtless act without previous intent or deliberate choice in an unconverted sinner grown old in sin, but not in saints like John and Paul and wholly impossible in our Lord. Yet if Christ were to commit sin He would have to make the deliberate choice; moreover He would have to break down all the barriers, all the walls of partition which the Father had set up between Him and sin. He that knew no sin, who was separate from sinners in His very conception, He would have to say, "Despite all this, I choose to sin." It would be less impossible for the sun to travel from west to east than for the Sun of Righteousness to turn from holiness to wickedness, from God to Satan.

The Divine and Human Organically Combined

This divine and this human holiness were combined in the God-Man—in fact they were never separated—and they became a divine-human holiness. Both are essential to our salvation. It surely must be a *human* holiness; how else could it cover the nakedness of a human soul? The raiment of angelic holiness will not fit humanity. And since His human holiness needed the constant

support and overshadowing of the divine holiness in order to stand in unbroken victory over all the powers of evil, therefore it must be a *divine* holiness. Hence, we may not separate them even in thought. In the God-Man they are forever and indissolubly united and invincible. Our Lord therefore could not sin.

Let us once more emphasize the following distinction. It is the human ego, not the human nature that sins. Hence we have here the union of the human with the divine, the divine embracing and overshadowing the human, and sin is excluded. He who suffered the death of the crucifixion could not commit sin either voluntarily or otherwise. Involuntary sin is an absurdity, for sin is always an act of the will. He who came to do the Father's will, whose meat it was to do that will, even though it required Him to die on the accursed tree, could not oppose the Father's will. How could He sin and embrace that which His soul abhorred and renounce that which was to Him more precious than life! It was an essential love of righteousness and an essential hatred of wickedness. How can fire be cold, or the dazzling brilliance of the noonday be darkness?

Let us repeat that our Lord could not sin. This was not a physical, but a moral impossibility. He could not because He would not. And in saying this we ascribe to Him what we might call an intuitive determination. We cannot believe that He ever consciously determined that He never would sin. His mind and heart were so engrossed with the delightful activities of holiness that it never even could occur to Him that there might be an unholy activity with reference to Himself. The thing lay so completely beyond His horizon that He never gave it a thought. He never said to Himself: "I cannot sin because I will not." He was holy, naturally, organically, spontaneously. And so we say, He could not sin; and yet strange as it may seem, *it was not this inability* which kept Him from sin. Let us illustrate:

We can imagine a business man financially embarrassed. He is in the bank. Only one door separates him from the vaults. The door is unlocked and he is alone. If he would he could help himself to any amount with impunity. But neither the thought nor the desire entered his mind; for he was a man of sterling honesty. *Morally* he could not steal; *physically* he could, for the door was unlocked. At least he thought so. The fact was that a bank official had locked it. Hence physically he could not steal. Yet *that* did not keep him from stealing for *he never knew it*. He left the place still thinking that the door to the vaults was unlocked. He did not steal *not* because he *could* not, but because he was honest. So did our Lord not sin because He could not, but because He was holy with a divine-human holiness. His inability to sin was not the ground of His impeccability.

Let us now consider the great fact of our Lord's impeccability from another viewpoint. To this end we quote from J. J. Van Oosterzee's *Systematic Theology*, II, 429, Dutch edition. "The sinlessness of our Lord should always be considered as an attribute of His humanity and distinct from the absolute holiness of Him who can not be tempted with evil (James 1:13). His moral purity by itself did not exclude the possibility of sinning. In the absence of the latter the former would have lost its moral value. The great thing most to be admired in this respect is His perfect self-command in the presence of greatest temptations, a self-command so great that it may be said of Him '*Potent non peccare.*' As the result of incessant conflict He did so completely overcome the power of evil, that to Him the doing of sin was morally an absolute impossibility. In other words, His ability not to sin became more and more inability to sin. St. John's testimony regarding every believer, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is

born of God' (First Epistle 3:9) applies in still larger degree to the Captain of their salvation. However, Christ's sinlessness should not be interpreted as the effect of an original irresistible and natural necessity, but of a free, moral-spiritual, vital principle. The actual possibility never left Him because He was human as we are; exposed to temptation growing more terrible as the end was coming nearer. And the fact that He has resisted this possibility to the end, does not in the least make Him less human. Adam's example before the fall proves that one can be a man without becoming a sinner. Sin does not belong to man's original nature but to humanity in its present condition. He that overcomes in this conflict is not less but rather much more a man than he who sins every day. Hence with reference to Christ we have to conceive of a *posse peccare* which as the result of a free act of the will never became a reality; a formal liberty which developed most harmoniously into a most real moral liberty; a concrete possibility of temptation, but which at all times was most triumphantly overcome."

We would heartily agree with these words of Van Oosterzee, if the premises were correct, viz., that the sinlessness of our Lord was an attribute of His humanity. Of course it is human, and if it were only human, Van Oosterzee would be perfectly correct. But it was not only *human,* but *divine-human,* and therefore, the premises being wrong, the conclusion cannot be correct. The holiness of our Lord was that of the God-Man, hence it was divine-human. And the two may not be separated; there is no line of demarcation showing where the one begins and the other ends. Though the two natures in Christ ever remain distinct and are never blended nor confused, yet they are so intimately united that no dividing line can ever be discovered. There is distinction but no division. The union is organic. And

this applies to the holiness of the God-Man. There is distinction but no division.

Hence we cannot deduct anything from the human holiness of Christ apart from the divine, for the two never were apart. From the earliest moments of His self-conscious life the acting subject in the God-Man was the divine-human ego and therefore even the holiness of the child Jesus was divine-human and this, as we have seen, was absolutely excluded from sin's hateful intrusion.

Then, again, Van Oosterzee says: "His ability to sin became even more inability to sin." According to these words, our Lord began His earthly existence with the ability to sin and through moral and spiritual conflict developed this ability to inability to sin. When did He arrive at this victorious end? Apparently not during His earthly life, for Van Oosterzee adds, "The actual possibility never left Him because He was human as we are."

From the preceding discussion it is clear that we cannot agree with these conclusions. The question is this: Was the holiness of our Lord the effect of *conflict?*

We do not deny that our Lord passed through many conflicts wherein He cried out: "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." But we do not believe that His holiness was the effect of conflict. If from the beginning of His earthly existence He was the God-Man, then His holiness was divine-human even in His infancy, and as such could not pass from *posse non peccare* to *non posse peccare.*

But even His mere human holiness was not the effect of conflict, no more than it was in the first Adam, who was *created* holy. Holiness was one of the principal features of the divine image wherein he was created. The other features were knowledge and righteousness. Knowledge denotes the *mental* life; righteousness,

man's relation to God, the *religious* life; holiness, the *moral* life. In Scriptures, holiness is absolute separation from sin. Such was Adam's moral condition, the result of his righteous status. He was absolutely free from moral evil; he was unadulterated, purest gold. There was nothing in him foreign to his nature, no more than there is in God. God is *One* excluding every possible form of dualism like that of good and evil, the old Parsee error. Adam's holiness was human; that of God is divine. But neither in man nor in God is it the result of moral conflict.

True, Adam's holiness had not yet been tested and therefore it was not *confirmed* holiness. Holiness confirmed is indeed the effect of moral conflict, but not mere simple holiness. In order to be divinely confirmed it must successfully endure trial and temptation. And yet, even when it has stood the test triumphantly and is divinely confirmed, now having attained the higher freedom of *non posse peccare* even then the effect is simple holiness, nothing more. The *subject* has attained higher freedom but his holiness is still simple holiness, nothing has been added to it. It was simply tried and proven to be permanent and not able to be overthrown, like that of holy angels; but still it was just holiness. Gold, having passed through the fire, tried and having lost the dross, comes out gold, nothing more; in the fire nothing was added. So holiness when confirmed is not a greater holiness or of a higher degree but just holiness. Holiness has no degrees. There is no holy, holier, holiest. And so did the Lord Jesus pass through countless temptations and the gold of His holiness sustained them all and came out victorious and there was no dross found. Hence after the trial His holiness was the same. The moral conflict added nothing to it. It did not even shine with greater luster. Not His holiness but He Himself, the Mediator was made perfect; He

learned obedience by the things which He suffered and so became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him (Heb. 5:9).

St. Anselm in his "Dialogue on the Human Will and Freedom" clearly proves that inability to sin implies no restriction on freedom but a freedom greater than ours. In this respect also the second Adam stood far above the first Adam in that He shared the divine freedom by virtue of His union with the Son of God. Christ illustrates this point of the higher freedom by saying: "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house forever: but the Son abideth ever" (John 8:34,35). The servant does not abide in the house forever. This is the *restricted* freedom of the servant; but the Son abideth ever; here we have the *larger*, the *complete* freedom excluding expulsion from the house of holiness because He is the Son. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (v. 36). He makes us free with His own perfect freedom. Hence St. John says in perfect harmony with all this: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (First Epistle 3:9). Hence He is perfectly free and that means forever; free with His freedom; wholly unable to sin; confirmed in holiness! Holy as He is holy! Blessed prospect!

CHAPTER 4

A HUMAN NATURE, NOT A HUMAN PERSON

"He was conceived by the Holy Ghost." And here we must make the following fundamental distinction: *that which was conceived by the Holy Ghost was a human nature and not a human person.*

In the incarnation the Son of God did not unite Himself with a human person, but with a human nature. The inspired record of Matthew and Luke is very explicit and states the fact with absolute precision. To Mary Gabriel said: "That holy *thing* which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Says M. Dodds: "Now what was generated was the humanity of our Lord, which is not called a *person* which it was not, but a *thing* (*to*, Gr.). It is called "it," not "he."

We would perhaps not notice this if the Scripture elsewhere did not teach the same thing. In the Greek New Testament the Holy Spirit is frequently denoted by the neutral article *it* (*to pneuma*, Eph. 4:30; I Thess. 4:8; Matt. 3:16, etc.), but since the Lord Jesus always speaks of Him in the personal terms, "him," "he," we do not pay any attention to the "it." And so here the "it" in the annunciation would be immaterial and in spite of it we would speak of the *person* of the *man* Jesus, if the impersonality of His human nature were not so strongly taught even if by implication, in all the New Testament. Now, however, the "it" becomes significant and appears as the carefully selected word by the Holy

Spirit to denote the fact that it was the conception of a human *nature* and not of a human *person*. Bishop Moule puts it very clearly: "The human nature never for a moment stood or stands apart from the divine nature and person, 'God sent forth his Son, born of a woman' (Gal. 4:4). He did not send His Son to join a man born of a woman, which would have been an alliance of two persons, but a harmony of two natures in relation to one person. The Manhood was and is never independently personal. It is better to say, Christ is Man, than Christ is *a Man*" (*Outlines of Doctrine*, p. 61).

This whole question was thoroughly examined by the Council at Chalcedon (A.D. 452). And finally it was settled that "The Logos did not unite Himself with a distinct individual, but with a human nature." "An individual man was not first conceived and born, with whom the Second Person in the Godhead then associated Himself, but the union was effected with the substance of humanity in the womb of the virgin. Says Hooker: 'He took not angels, but the seed of Abraham.' If the Son of God had taken to Himself a man now made and already perfect, it would of necessity follow that there are in Christ two persons, the one assuming and the other assumed; whereas the Son of God did not assume a man's *person* into His own (person) but a man's *nature* to His own person; and therefore took the semen, the seed of Abraham, the very original element of our nature, before it was come to have any personal human subsistence. The flesh and the conjunction of the flesh with God began both at the one instant; this making and taking to Himself our flesh was but one act, so that in Christ there is no personal subsistence but one and that from everlasting. The distinction between a 'nature' and a 'person' is of as great consequence in Christology, as in Trinitarianism; and the Chalcedon divines were enabled by carefully observing it, to

combine all the Scriptural data relating to the incarnation into a form of statement that has been accepted by the church universal ever since,[3] and beyond which it is probable the human mind is unable to go in the endeavor to unfold the mystery of Christ's complex Person, which in some aspects is even more baffling than the mystery of the Trinity" (Shedd, *History of Christian Doctrine*, I, 407).

The church always held the Chalcedonian statement as final. "It is regarded," says Dr. Schaff, "by the Greek and Roman and the majority of English and American divines as the ne plus ultra of Christological knowledge attainable in this world." In his firm adherence to this statement Dr. Shedd serenely ignores all subsequent Christological controversies and speculations. Dr. Hodge notices and criticizes several of the more recent erroneous and heretical doctrines as he calls them, but abides in the Chalcedonian Statement as adopted by the Scholastic Calvinists of the seventeenth century.

The View of Modernism

Since the beginning of the last century and up to the present time this vital truth has been sharply assailed and stoutly denied by evangelical and rationalistic divines in Europe and in our country.

It is a curious fact that the repudiation of this doctrine has become associated with the avowed belief in the incarnation even *apart from sin*. Those who support the doctrine under discussion, on the whole reject the belief in an incarnation apart from sin and vice versa.

It was Schleiermacher, that devout and spiritually-minded Christian, who is called "the father of modern scientific theology," (1768-1834), who led the way, and to whom according to Selbie, his biographer, "Every

credit must be given for his bold and definite breach with the traditional Christology" (p. 133). "He does not feel himself bound either to the Chalcedonian formula or to any of the credal statements of the Church. He has no great faith in a Metaphysical Trinity" (p. 113). In fact Schleiermacher was a Sabellian. His Christology represents the highest form of humanitarianism with an important admission that there was in Christ a supernatural or divine element. Yet he denies Christ's eternal personal pre-existence and exalts Him as the ideal man in whom alone the ideal of humanity has been realized. He taught that Christ, though the ideal man and therefore a product of the creative energy of God out of the common course, was nevertheless but a completion of creation, that to which the rudimentary man of the first creation was destined to reach and toward which the human race in the onward course had been steadily approximating. While therefore there was in Christ a divine initiation, it was an initiation which did no violence to the law of evolution; though there was a miracle it was a small one. "He frequently speaks of Christ as the *archetypical man*, which means that He both originates and perpetuates a type. Our Lord is a worthy object of man's faith, which implies that He holds a relation to the human race which is unique and of which no other is capable. His perfect God-consciousness gives to His person this special and peculiar significance. This God-consciousness must have existed in a perfect archetypical form and must have wholly determined His activities before it could have been mediated through Him to others."

Since, according to Selbie, Schleiermacher represents the beginning of the new method in the work of theological reconstruction and the new spirit, we need not be surprised that he and the teachers of reconstructed theology or modernism vigorously deny the Chalcedonian

Statement regarding the apparent impersonality of Christ's human nature.

According to modernism, His human nature was *not* impersonal. In fact it was the *human personality of Christ* which was the most important factor in the incarnation. In the incarnation it is alleged Christ honored man by assuming the human personality. "*The Incarnation was the effect of the divine striving to live in the ideal man and of the striving on the part of the ideal man to seek for himself in God,*" as Schleiermacher used to express it. The term "God-man" has therefore but one meaning, i.e., the essential similarity of the divine and the human. The incarnation therefore was a great and decisive step in the long process of human evolution, which in the end must culminate in man becoming divine. Necessarily the incarnation must have occurred even if sin had *not* entered the human heart. The motive of the incarnation was not merely to atone for and redeem man from sin as Anselm so gloriously had set forth, but to enable man in his striving to find himself in God, by the new impetus imparted in the incarnation, to attain his final destiny. Hence the Son of God assumed the human personality, so filling it with the manifestation and consciousness of God that it must be honored as divine. Even among those moderns who accept John's doctrine of the Logos, some teach that the Logos is eternally personal and archetypical Man, and that man, singly and collectively, stands necessarily in eternal relations to Him as the primal Man. Hence in his creation man was not only created after the image of Christ, but he was so disposed and constituted that only by the incarnation of the Logos, man's highest evolution could be realized and his predestined end be secured, to wit, his deification.[4] In fact it is alleged as Bishop Moule puts it: "Man stands in so near a revealed relation to God that it must be eternal, a

parte ante in the Person of the Son." Naturally the eternal plan of God regarding man, as well as man's whole being and destiny demanded that the Logos become man, and man in Him become God. The fact that sin came into the world made the incarnation not more necessary. It furnished the occasion but was not by any means the only and real cause of the incarnation. Necessarily it follows that the sacrifice of Christ was not expiatory and substitutional, but a mysterious instilling of His own life and divine energy into the heart and veins of humanity, through His self-surrender into death. And therefore it was pre-eminently necessary and proper that the Logos should assume a complete human personality and not merely a human nature.

"Are we to believe," asks Martensen, "that the most glorious fact in the world was possible only through sin and that without it there would be no room in history for the glory of the only begotten of the Father?" If that were the case then sin is not only not as black as it is painted but it has a glorious redeeming feature; and since this is intolerable, there must be another and deeper reason for the incarnation, i.e., the Son's own eternal relation to humanity as the primal archetypical Man. And from this follows man's future essential identification with Christ; and that should be man's *deification*, sharing with Him the glory of the Son of God.

In his Christology (III, 85) Dr. Van Oosterzee lucidly sets forth the grounds of his belief in the incarnation of the Son apart from sin. He writes as follows: "However certain it is that the Son of God appeared as the Mediator of reconciliation, it is not less certain that He is also the highest manifestation of the invisible Godhead: and that man was originally destined to be equal with God. Now it is the question whether man, apart from sin, could have attained that destiny if the Logos Himself, the image of the Father and humanity's

Ideal, had not appeared in human flesh. And the Apostle Paul seems to answer this in the negative, for he writes: 'Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven' (I Cor. 15:46,47). It was not sin by which the human body became natural but it was so from the beginning: and it could not become a spiritual body but by the Lord from heaven. Even if man had not fallen he must gradually have been educated and advanced to higher perfection. And why may we then not accept that among the means employed by highest Love, the sending of the Son in human flesh must have had a place? An act so stupendous as the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ can scarcely be the effect of a non-essential phenomenon, viz., sin. God's world-plan to gather together in one all things in Christ, to advance all to highest completion and felicity, does not date from the hour of the first sin, but from the ages of eternity. Undoubtedly—speaking of the things of God after the manner of men—by the entrance of sin the divine plan was *modified*. Even as sin causes a fatal disturbance in the divinely ordained world-order, even so it causes now that He who was from eternity the highest Revealer of the Godhead, very definitely must appear in the character of Expiator and Redeemer, in order vicariously to suffer, to atone, to die. But even if Adam had remained standing, and holy humanity had been advanced from virtue to virtue and from one blessed state to another, it would, according to our mind, not have been able to attain its destiny but at the hand of the Logos; and if we are not deceived, a personal manifestation of God in the Son of His love would have been the highest link in the educational plan of God, and the choice means to make man partaker of His holiness by means of beholding the divine in human flesh. True, there would

have been no need of redemption if the test-commandment had not been disobeyed; but the perfecting of creation, the attainment or the final end to which it was originally disposed seems unthinkable without the appearing of Him who, according to St. Paul, is the Head of the body that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. (Col. 1:18). With perfect right does Thomas Aquinas, the acutest teacher of the Church of the Middle Ages, answer his own question: 'If man had not sinned would God have appeared in the flesh?' in this way: 'It appears that even in that case the Godhead would have appeared in the flesh. For with the cause remains also the effect.' But as Augustine has it: 'Many things are to be observed in Christ besides deliverance from sin. Is it not a part of divine Omnipotence that He perfect His works and manifest Himself in an operation which is truly infinite? But no mere creature can perform such a work for he is but finite. It is in the Incarnation alone that the divine Omnipotence was manifested. For by it that which is infinitely apart becomes united, in as much as in the Incarnation God became man. By it even the universe becomes perfect, since the last-born creature, man, is now united with God who is the first beginning. Moreover, since man became a sinner nothing has been added to his nature to make it more capable of receiving God's gifts of grace. Even now, being a sinner, the human nature is still capable of the greatest grace, even that of becoming one with God. Hence, if man had not sinned, it would have been capable of the same grace, and God would not have denied it a blessedness which it was capable of receiving.' (See *Summa of Thomas Aquinas*, III, 1, 3)."[5]

We have quoted these interesting passages for the better understanding of this position, whose unscriptural character and dangerous tendencies must be exposed, especially in the present time wherein this same error

is again presented as advanced spiritual truth. The error is not new, but the unearthing of an ancient fossil. The first traces are already noticeable in some of the Church Fathers. In the Middle Ages it was probably Rupert of Deutz (d. 1135) who first advanced it. After him Duns Scotus repudiated Anslem's position that the atonement was the motive of the incarnation. With Heinrich Eckhart, the famous mystic born in 1260, "from whom," as one pupil proudly proclaims, "God kept nothing hid," the incarnation, rather than the cross, was the central fact of Christianity. Christ is the ideal Man in whom all have their unity and reality, as in the ground of this ideal and reality they rise to their own ground. The incarnation, or self-revelation of God, was thus a real necessity and would have been even if Adam had not sinned. "This view of the Incarnation," says H. B. Workman, "which fits in so well with the modern teleological view of the universe and the familiar idea of the ascent of man, was a favorite with the medieval writers of different schools."

The Answer of Scripture to Modernism

The doctrine of the apparent impersonality of the human nature in Christ is repudiated by many, because, according to their view, in the incarnation the *human personality* is the most important factor. It is alleged that by the incarnation man received a new impetus in his striving to find God in himself, and that thus he was enabled to attain his final destiny.

This teaching finds no support in the Scripture. By nature man does not seek after God (Rom. 3:11). There may be in the human soul an unconscious seeking after the divine, but that has no moral value, no more than creation's earnest expectation waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19). Neither was it the

motive of the incarnation to enable man to attain his final destiny. In his annunciation to Joseph, the angel of the Lord mentions the aim and end of the holy birth by saying, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall–lead His people to their final destiny? by no means–for he shall save his people from their sins." (Matt. 1:22). Surely, by His Spirit He shall bring His people back to God who is their home and final destiny, but only after He shall have saved them from their sins. As Paul has it very clearly in Galatians 4:4: "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made (born) of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons." In Matthew 20:28 the Lord Himself very clearly states the purpose of His coming: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." And again: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). St. Paul states the same purpose of the incarnation in Romans 8:3: ". . . God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

And finally, let us refer to that wonderful classic, Philippians 2:7,8, where the apostle speaks of the self-emptying of the Son when He took upon Himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Here the apostle puts the incarnation in closest juxtaposition with His atoning death as the motive and purpose of His self-emptying. And in this connection he uses the word "humbled." Why is it that modernism repudiates the apparent impersonality of Christ's human nature, while it so insistently advances the theory of an incarnation apart from sin? There must be a reason

for this. And the reason which we assign is as follows: Modernism seeks to shield the human personality from the humiliation which the cross puts upon it. While Modernism erects a shrine where it renders its idol, the human personality, almost divine honor, the doctrine repudiated represents it as overshadowed by the divine. And such a representation is a reproach to the human personality. Modernism knows nothing in the universe so great and glorious as the human personality; it is God's noblest creation, His "chef d'oeuvre," higher in the end than the personality of angels, and eventually to be identified with God. And now to say that in Christ that very personality apparently disappeared, became obscured, lost its independence, oh, no, that cannot be allowed. And if this were all! But in addition to this Paul teaches that in Christ the whole human nature together with the sinful human ego was humbled to the death of the cross, was brought into the dust of death, as an evil and an accursed thing was crucified, was dead and was buried and brought down into Sheol! And such teaching is too much for the sensitive feelings of Modernism, too much for its imagined greatness to tolerate. A truth which is so humbling to its most precious idol must be denied, and the theory which crowns it with new honor and glory must take its place.

"There is nothing new under the sun." Paul, facing Greek culture and philosophy, the idols of antiquity, testified: "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews is a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (I Cor. 1:23).

According to the whole tenor of the New Testament the incarnation was intended only as a means to this end that our Lord might condemn sin in the flesh; that in His human nature He might not only fulfill the righteousness of the law but also suffer the penalty of sin, and restore and honor the law which was violated and dis-

honored by the sins of the world; that by His death and resurrection, exaltation and mediation on the throne, He might through the gift of the Holy Spirit, regenerate, convert, sanctify and glorify *the fallen* human nature and in this way restore and advance it to its final destiny. For God, says Paul, "was in Christ"–not leading man to his final destiny but–"reconciling the world unto himself" (II Cor. 5:19).

And finally, John emphatically states the purpose of His manifestation in the flesh when he says: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (I John 3:8). And thus the first statement in the Bible regarding the purpose of the Coming One as the Seed of the woman, was fulfilled. Potentially He did bruise Satan's head.

This whole representation of the incarnation, apart from sin, in order to lead man to his final destiny, ignores the fact that man is lost in and by sin. It ignores the cross. According to all the teaching of the New Testament not the *incarnation* but the *cross* is the center of the revelation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Paul says: "I am determined to know nothing but Christ and him crucified."

That the incarnation in order to redeem us from sin and its consequences was the effect not of a *modified* plan of God but wholly original is evident from such passages as I Peter 1:18-20, "For as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world." In Revelation 13:8 we again find the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world. Paul also had the same thought, expressed in Ephesians 1:4-7, ". . .according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and

without blame before him in love: *in whom we have redemption in his blood*, the forgiveness of sins, *according* to the riches of his grace."

And the Scripture never impresses us with the thought that God ever modified His plan; on the contrary we are assured with the utmost confidence: "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa. 46:10). And again: "I am Jehovah, I change not" (Mal. 3:6). A beautiful echo of this we hear in James 1:17 where he calls God "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness (changeableness) neither shadow of turning."

There are, however, a few questions in the foregoing quotations which deserve consideration. Van Oosterzee says: "Now it is the question whether man apart from sin, could have attained that destiny if the Logos Himself . . . had not appeared in human flesh." And to this we reply: by no means. Even holy Adam was not an independent source of power and wisdom. As the rosebud cannot attain the perfect development of the blooming rose without the nourishment from the soil and the light and heat of the sun, no more could Adam attain the perfection and completion of his complex nature and being without a special operation on the part of his Creator. And that Adam was intended to attain higher perfection may not be doubted. In Genesis 2:3 we read, "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he *had rested* from all his work which God had created *to make it perfect*" (Dutch translation).

According to this rendering—which we believe to be correct, for the Dutch version of 1637 is still of high authority—the Lord God devoted the seventh day, which had no evening, that is no end, to the perfecting of all that He had made, i.e., of all that could be perfected.

The animal world is not capable of higher perfection, but man is. The animal world cannot develop, but man must develop. Development is the law of his being. Physically, mentally, morally, socially and spiritually he must grow and increase until he reaches maturity, and then enter upon the higher state of his being for which God had created and destined him, and to which he was originally predisposed.

And this development was to take place according to *the divine plan* and by the *means divinely ordained.* This also shows that by and of himself Adam was helpless regarding self-development. And this was implied in his very creation after the divine image. The relation thus indicated is that of absolute dependence upon his God. We see this beautifully set before us in the absolute dependence of the second Adam upon His heavenly Father.

John in his prologue to his gospel(1:3,4,9) gives us light on the question, by whom and by what means was Adam to receive this growth and development? "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." The eternal Son is the Creator of all things and by Him all things consist. He Himself therefore must be the One from and through whom must come the increase and development of the nature and being of man created after His own image. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." Here notice, this is said of the Logos *before* the incarnation. It belongs not to His operations in saving grace, but to purely common grace. He is the life of all creation but in man alone *life* becomes *light.* It is the light of self-conscious existence, the light of reason, the conscience, the soul; light mental, ethical, aesthetical, social, spiritual; the spiritual vision

wherewith man beholds nature, himself, his God.

Being man's Creator, the Logos is man's Instructor, his Guide, his Life and his Light. Not to Adam in his holy state alone, but, "he lighteth *every man* that cometh into the world" (v.9). This indicates his *cosmical prophetism* which would have been sufficient if man had remained holy. After the fall this cosmical prophetism became the deep foundation of His mediatorial prophetism in the operation of saving grace.

And as the Logos, man's divine Instructor, He had prepared all of creation, sun, moon, and stars and the wonders in the earth to be the divine revelation, man's textbook, wherein he should see reflected the perfection and glory of God. Paul describes it in Romans 1:19, 20: "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." This is clearly expressed by the Confession of the Reformed Dutch Church (Art 2): "We know Him by two means: First, by the creation, preservation and government of the universe: which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God, namely, His eternal power and Godhead, as the Apostle Paul saith. (Rom. 1:20). We know that Paul wrote this to the Gentiles, for even after the fall the light of the Logos kept on shining and is still shedding its rays however dimmed by sin, in the hearts and consciences of men. And if even now that light is still so bright that God shall judge them according to their obedience and faithfulness to that light, how brightly and gloriously it must have illuminated man's whole being still untouched by sin."

In Proverbs 8:31 we have a glimpse of the light and fellowship which holy Adam and Eve enjoyed in the

Garden. There the Logos, wisdom impersonated, speaks: "Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; my delights were with the sons of men." From this we may conclude that there was a blessed fellowship of love and joy between man and his Creator, God in the person of the Logos. But more we may not say. We might speculate on this and also on the Tree of Life which stood in the midst of the garden, and say that this was symbolical of Christ, the true Tree of Life and the Bread from heaven, and hence that Christ was that already in the garden, but that would not be profitable because the scriptural data are insufficient. But this is sure, that sinless man stood in direct fellowship with the Logos. That from Him who is the wisdom of God knowledge and wisdom were imparted to him, sufficient for the development of every faculty, power, gift and talent wherewith he had been endowed. He needed no more. He had the spiritual vision which by sin we have lost. He did not need therefore the visible manifestation of God in the Word Incarnate as we do in our sinful state. He saw God with the inward eye in the light of his own immediate presence. In the light of that blessed, inward immediated fellowship he saw the light. Fellowship is the first step toward true knowledge. There was nothing in him to hinder that fellowship; and everything to love, to desire, with deeper draughts to drink from this inebriating cup. There was therefore an uninterrupted increase in the knowledge of Him whom to know is life eternal. What wisdom is there manifested in the giving of names to the animal creation. His master eye enlightened by the light of the Logos, penetrated every creature as it stood before him, and read its inmost nature, being and place in creation, as an open book; and the impression thus made found expression in a word which became the name thereof. In fact, Adam was the originator of human speech.

Can there be clearer proof of the fact that the

Logos was to him light in the most comprehensive sense of the word; and that He had already undertaken his *mental* development? Proof that his *moral* development was also begun, we find in the test commandment. If Adam had remained true to God his training by the Logos would have been continued in ever increasing degree and with ever more glorious results.

And thus we believe and teach that the incarnation of the Logos apart from sin was wholly unnecessary with respect to Adam. The first man is of the earth earthy, but not in the sense that he could see nothing but the earth, incapable of beholding the invisible and spiritual. Such blindness is the effect of sin. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." And Adam was pure in heart even as the second Adam; and as the Latter had uninterrupted vision of and fellowship with God so had the former. As with reference to the second Adam, the Holy Spirit was ever pouring out in His heart the love of God, so He was with reference to the first Adam; for this blessed operation of the Holy Spirit is an *oriqinal* act. There was no sin, hence there could be no sanctification. But the Holy Spirit was there in Adam, through the education and training of the Logos, to lead him to his final destiny. There was no sanctification but there was a steady going forth from strength to strength, and from glory to glory in fellowship with the triune God.

Is sin then after all the cause for the incarnation? This too we emphatically deny. There is no redeeming feature whatever about sin. The bold cry of Christian antiquity: "*Felix culpa*" (blessed sin) does not find a response in Scripture. If that were the case sin would have at least one redeeming feature, and we would owe it some consideration. But according to Scripture we owe sin nothing but everlasting hatred and loathing, together with the whole-souled consecration of every saint, of

all his sanctified powers to overcome, neutralize and destroy it.

In spite of sin God manifested mercy in the incarnation. Sin is no more the cause of mercy than hunger is the cause of bread, than disease is the cause of medicine, than darkness is the cause of light. What the germ does not contain it cannot produce. All the hunger of the world could not create one loaf of bread. God foresaw hunger and sickness and therefore He ordained and created bread and medicine. Sin never was merciful. Sin is the essence of cruelty. Not sin but the infinite love of God ordained the incarnation. "With an eternal love have I loved thee." In order to cause mercy sin must be co-eternal with mercy. By an eternity, however, mercy antedates sin. Oh, let us acknowledge it more gratefully than ever that God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit alone is the Author of our salvation. To Him alone the glory, the praise and the thanksgiving.

Before we proceed to study the relation between the two natures of our Lord, let us first state the basic fact of all Christological discussion: *The Unity of His Person.* We believe with Paul that there is one Spirit, one Lord. Christ is not divided. However unfathomable the mystery may be, we believe and confess that our Lord is One. One, not only in *essential* union with the Father and the Holy Spirit; One, not only with His Body, the Church and every individual believer in *spiritual* union; but One, *personally, psychologically,* undivided and indivisible.

And with this testimony, we enter upon the study of the question: Does not the confession of the apparent impersonality of the human nature in Christ imply the denial of His perfect humanity? If it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, could He possibly be that without a human ego, i.e., without a human personality? If we are thus to understand the doctrine, then we conclude

that our Lord was not a true man, and, Chalcedon notwithstanding, we too repudiate the doctrine.

In reply to this we say, that the doctrine does not deny the human ego in our Lord. Neither at Chalcedon nor at any other council, was the human personality ever denied. And here we take shelter under the wing of His undoubted and proven veracity. He declared that He was a man again and again. No one ever doubted His humanity, or suspected His Deity. To the Jews He said, "But now ye seek to kill me, a *man* that hath told you the truth" (John 8:40). His word with reference to the many mansions in His Father's house, we may here apply with equal force. "If it were not so, I would have told you." He never told them that He was not a man. All His utterances with reference to this are to the contrary. Twenty-two times in Matthew alone does He call Himself the Son of man. He refers to His physical condition, to His soul, to His spirit. In every respect we find Him a complete man. Hence on His own authority we confess that He is truly man, now though glorified and exalted at His Father's right hand, still truly man, the Representative of human nature, the first born of many brethren, our bone and our flesh, pleading our cause which He has made His own, with the Father, whence we expect His return, when the man whom God hath ordained shall judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31).

And as man we hear Him speak of Himself in the first person which must have been the human ego. Take for instance the following: His word on the cross wherein His filial affection provides a home for His widowed mother, "Woman, behold thy son"; or "I thirst" (John 19:28); or in the garden, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"; and again, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:38,39). These are

certainly utterances of personality. Is it the human or the divine? We dare say, that it is the human; that in the Garden His human soul was in such anguish and distress, and, on the cross it was so deeply moved by the sight of His bereaved mother, and, that His physical sufferings just before the end, became so unbearable, that it could not be otherwise but that on each of these occasions He should speak or cry out from His deepest human consciousness and give utterance to His feelings and emotions. And since we know from His own lips that He was truly Man we believe this to be true. *On the other hand*, does not the same personal pronoun in other connections, refer to His divine Person? Undoubtedly! For how could the human ego say: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6); or, "Before Abraham was, I am" (8:58); or, "I am the resurrection, and the life" (11:25); or, "Father, glorify thou me . . . with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (17:5); or, "I and my Father are one" (10:30) and so many other declarations which it would be blasphemy for man to make?

Hence, the same inspired record introduces us to a divine and a human ego. And yet, at Chalcedon it was stated that in Christ there was not a human person, but a human nature. And the Christian Church to the present time has accepted this as final. Surely, here we are in deep waters! And the mystery only deepens when we think of the two wills in Christ, one divine and the other human. And how can He be truly man without the faculty of volition and choice? In Gethsemane He prayed: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." In this deep distress of His soul Christ spoke from the human consciousness, and referred to His human will. On the contrary, in John 17: 24 He said: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am"; and here the

divine will was clearly indicated. Hence, as John of Damascus stated: "In Christ there are two consciousnesses, and two physical wills or faculties of self-determination."

And this is so impossible to reconcile with what we know of our own personality, that we do not wonder that many reject it. Says Schleiermacher: "As regarding the doctrine of the two wills. To say that His will was human would be to derogate from His divine nature, and to say that His will is divine would derogate from His human nature. While if both wills are maintained, the unity of the Person is inevitably destroyed" (Selbie, p. 120).

We trust that we have stated the problem clearly and correctly. It is a problem which has staggered many a thoughtful believer. Conscientiously he has for a long time tried to ignore his questionings which he often mistakenly calls the products of his fleshly mind; and he tried simply to believe. And yet, his inquiring mind will revert to the subject, never satisfied. In order to clear the way to a better understanding, he begins, just as we have done in the preceding paragraphs, *with separating* the two natures, the divine and the human, the two egos, the two wills, and the two consciousnesses. He reasons: "Here it is the Son of man who thinks, speaks or acts; and there it is the Son of God. How can I reconcile this with the orthodox view of a human nature and not a human person? The gospel teaches plainly that Christ possessed both. But—and this is the difficulty—this endows Him with *two* personalities. I am puzzled indeed!" And in this way neither heart nor mind will be at rest. Why not? For the simple reason that thus far we have followed the wrong method, or rather, we were both right and wrong. We are right in adopting the statement of John of Damascus concerning the two wills and two consciousnesses. But we were altogether wrong in *separating* them, the one from the other. They never may

be separated. Not even in thought, not even to assist our own limitations.

And that is so for the following reasons:

First, because God in infinite wisdom and power has joined them together for our salvation. And "what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." What the divine Mind has conceived, planned and executed cannot be absurd, contradictory or impossible. And since God has put them together we should seek for the solution of the problem not in their separation, but in their union.

Second, we should never separate the two natures in Christ, because in Him they never were separated. He Himself never separated them. He never said: "Now I speak as the Son of man," or, "Now I speak as the Son of God." In all His utterances there is not the slightest suggestion of such separation. Sometimes it seems as though He were unconscious of the distinction, although this we cannot affirm. Yet apparently the distinction disappears. What properly belongs to the Son of God He predicates of the Son of man. So in John 3:13 He said: "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." Properly speaking, the Son of man had not come down from heaven but was born of the virgin. Neither was He in heaven at that time, but on earth. To whom then does Christ refer? He referred neither to His humanity nor to His Deity, but to His Person. For in His Person the two were united, wherefore we call Him the God-Man. In the same manner we interpret Acts 20:28, ". . . the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." This seems a strange combination. How can God purchase the Church with His own blood? God is Spirit, and as such He can have no blood. The true interpretation which the Church has adopted long ago, is this: "That the Person who is both God and man, the God-man Jesus Christ, purchased the Church with

His own blood. The divine-human Person is called by the divine title God, and to Him is properly ascribed the human attribute of having blood. The act belongs neither to God nor to man but to the God-man.

In First Corinthians 2:8 Paul designates our Lord by a divine title the "Lord of Glory," and ascribes to Him the human condition of being crucified. ". . . for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." How could the Lord of Glory be crucified? By the "Lord of Glory" is designated neither the Son of God nor the Son of man, but the God-man in the unity of His personality. The two natures are so joined together that they together constitute the God-man." (Van Oosterzee).

Also, Colossians 1:14: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." In the previous verse our Lord is designated by a divine title "His dear Son" and a human attribute, His blood. The Son of God could not redeem us with His blood, for as such He has no blood; and the Son of man could not forgive us our sins. But as the God-man both acts naturally belong to Him. In His human nature He can redeem us with the ransom of His blood, and in His divine nature He can forgive us our sins. Both acts belong to the God-man. From all this we see how closely the two natures are united and constitute the personality of the God-man.

Third, like as separation of soul and body results in death, so would the separation of the two natures in Christ result in the destruction of the God-man and consequently, of our redemption. Athanasius, in his mighty conflict with Arius, regarding the essential equality of the Son with the Father, was so strenuous in his rejection of every compromise because he was so deeply conscious of the fact that our redemption depended upon the truth for which he so bravely contended. And this

was equally true at Chalcedon. It was not a quibble about philosophical distinctions but a conflict of spirits for the defense and scriptural exposition and expression of the vital truth regarding our Redeemer and our redemption. Whether the denial concerns His Godhead or His manhood it destroys the God-man and we have lost our Saviour.

Last, because the union from the moment of its formation in the womb of the virgin, was indissoluble and perpetual. Our Lord was never any thing else but the God-man. He was the God-man in the manger, in His step-father's shop, as the carpenter of Nazareth, asleep in the vessel, in Gethsemane where we find Him a worm and no man, on Calvary stripped of the last comfort, bleeding, thirsting, dying; in the tomb a human corpse, in Sheol, a disembodied spirit. On the third day it was the God-man who arose from the dead, who ascended unto heaven, who is now at the right hand of the Father whence He shall return the God-man to judge the living and the dead.

The union was indissoluble even in Christ's own thought. In all His utterances we never discover the slightest suggestion either of separating or even of contrasting the two. What He willed as the Son of God He equally willed as the Son of man. What He loved or hated, desired or abhorred, approved or condemned, affirmed or denied, as the Son of God, He equally loved or hated, etc., as the Son of man. For the Person who loved or hated was one and the same Person. It was one personality. And personality is a unit; it has no parts. Analysis of the human ego is impossible. It is indivisible. To say that with one part of my person I love this thing and with another part I hate it, is irrational. And this applies to the personality of Christ, which was the immediate effect of the intimate union of the divine Person with the human. And this union did not destroy the human

personality but overshadowed it, in that the divine was greater than the human. In the holy Trinity the divine Persons do not overshadow each other, for they are *equal*. The divine essence is one, but the Persons are three. There is *essential unity*, but *personal trinity*. In the God-man to the contrary, there is *duality of essence but a unity of person*. And as we state these things, which are above our human reason but not contrary to it, we humbly acknowledge that we cannot comprehend; but we worship and adore Him who is so great and past our finding out.

However, this union did not destroy the human personality but overshadowed it, forasmuch as the divine is greater than the human. The human was always in perfect submission to the divine, but it was not *annihilated*. In that case Christ could not have called Himself the Son of man. The human will was never opposed to the divine but always in sweetest harmony with the divine. It was ever: "Not as I will but as Thou wilt." There was conflict between His human *nature* which shrank from suffering, pain and death and His human *will*, but never between the *divine* will and the *human*. These two were so completely united and identified that conflict was out of the question. However, the human will was not absorbed by or lost in the divine, no more than the human ego, or the human consciousness. Each remained intact. The one remained divine, the other human.

And the same we observe in the unity of our own personality, which is the result of the joining together of soul and body. The material is not absorbed by or mixed with the immaterial. Each ever remains what it is. There is not conversion of the one into the other, but each remains itself and what it is. And yet they are so intimately united that in our consciousness we lose sight of the distinction. We say: "The mouth speaks, the eye

sees, the brain thinks and the foot walks." And yet it is not my mouth, eye, brain, or foot that acts, but my person. These various members are but the instruments of my personal acts. So it was with our Lord the God-man; so it is with Him now on the throne. The divine-human ego seems almost to lose sight of the distinction and now speaks as man, and assumes human attributes and conditions. He acknowledges hunger, thirst, weariness, joy, sorrow, depression or exaltation of spirit; and then again, He speaks as the Son of God having power over nature, disease, death, and demon. Even the waves and winds obey His will. And all this because of the wonderful union of God and man. Great is the mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh.

And each of these two natures remained in possession of its own attributes. Hence He is at once Creator and creature, Root and offspring, omnipotent and weak, the Prince of Life and child of death, omnipresent and localized, finite and infinite. His divine attributes are never imparted to His manhood. (When Peter assures us that by these great and precious promises we are to be partakers of the divine nature, he has reference not to the essential divine nature, which is uncommunicable, but to the *moral* nature of God–although not exclusively the moral nature–whereby we are partakers of His holiness.) For the two natures though intimately united are never *blended*. They are two and remain two, always distinct the one from the other. It is correct to speak of a divine-human *Person*, but not of a divine-human *nature*. Hence while He assures us to our joy and comfort: "Lo, I am with you alway even to the end of the age," the apostle declares, that the heavens must receive Him until the restitution of all things. Some think it strange that Christ is not with us now in the earth, but is represented by the Holy Spirit. How could He be here, since He is the God-man upon the throne in heaven? His

body though glorified is not omnipresent, any more than our bodies are. But He shall return as the God-man to judge the earth in righteousness and reign as King of kings and Lord of lords, but even then as the God-man. He shall put down all rule and authority and power—and the Son Himself shall be subject unto Him who put all things under Him, but even then He shall remain the God-man forever and ever.

Hence, the whole work of Christ is to be attributed to His *Person.* The one Person both in God and man; and not to the one or the other exclusively. "It is the one divine human Person of Christ that wrought miracles by virtue of His divine nature and that suffered through the sensorium of infinite merit of the Redeemer's work must be ascribed to His Person because of His divinity; while it is His humanity alone that made Him capable of and liable to temptation, suffering and death and renders Him an example for our imitation" (Schaff).

And in this union the divine so completely identified Himself with and so overshadowed the human personality, that it led the Fathers of Chalcedon to confess that the Logos united Himself to the human nature and not to a human person. Hence it was strictly speaking not an impersonal human nature, for that is a contradiction of terms, but it is *apparently* impersonal. The ego of the Son of God so embraced it, so intimately joined it to Himself that it appeared as one and in His own consciousness is one and lives as one.

Is the Lord Jesus Christ then a true man? Consider the following: "If in Paradise the Son of God produced in the human nature a true man, by endowing it with a human ego, which was created after the divine image, is it then not just as much a true man when He Himself—instead of His image—enters the human nature with the Ego of His own eternal, divine Personality" (Kuyper, *Dodraceno,* I, 372). Or, as the writer of these lines

would put it: . . . is it then not just as much a true man when He Himself enters the human nature and *unites its ego in indissoluble union with the Ego of His own eternal Personality?* Necessarily, the result of this union is the Ego of the God-man.

We close this chapter with the following statements from Shedd's *History of Doctrine*, I, 401:

"The Chalcedonian statement prohibits the division of Christ into two selves or persons. The incarnating act while it makes no changes in the properties of the two natures, gives as a resultant a Person that is a 'tertium quid'; a resultant that is neither a human person, nor a divine person, but a *theanthropic* person. For if we have reference merely to His self-consciousness, or personality, Jesus Christ is neither human nor divine, but is divine-human. Contemplating Him as the resultant of the union of God and man He is not denominated God and He is not to be denominated man. The Person of Jesus Christ as distinguished from the natures that compose it, is a theanthropic Person."

CHAPTER 5

THE HUMILIATION OF THE SON OF GOD

The sacred Scripture teaches us that in the incarnation the Son of God humbled Himself. Paul clearly states this in Philippians 2:6-8: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

This is designated as the statement of our Lord's self-humiliation. Yet there is a clear distinction between our Lord's self-emptying and His self-humiliation. They are neither synonymous nor interchangeable. This self-emptying is one act, His self-humiliation quite another. In fact Paul's wording of the text implies that after the self-emptying had been an accomplished fact, the self-humiliation took place; quite some time intervened. Hence they are two distinct acts of the Son of God. Properly speaking, the former was the act of the Logos, the latter that of the God-man.

This may be one of the reasons why some modern interpreters deny that in the self-emptying He humbled Himself. The self-emptying precedes the self-humiliation; the former is recorded in verse 8. In the author's mind they were apparently very distinct. But of this we speak later; here we only call the attention of the reader to the fact. We acknowledge that the acts totally differentiate in every respect, yet the two together may be designated as the *humiliation* of our Lord, in contrast to His *exaltation*,

which began with His resurrection from the dead. Then his humiliation ceased and the rapid process of His exaltation and glorification commenced.

We begin our treatment of this subject with the study of the Kenosis, its *nature* and *limits*.

The term, Kenosis, used in theological discussions, is derived from the Greek verb used by Paul in the text *(keno)* and denotes, with the reciprocal pronoun, the act of self-emptying. Hence it designates the act of our Lord in hiding the divine glory and majesty and taking upon Himself the form of a servant.

The doctrine of the Kenosis, given in Philippians 2:6-8, was the subject of a controversy in the Lutheran Church in Germany between the universities of Giessen and Tubingen in the early part of the seventeenth century, and died out in the terrible experiences of the Thirty Years' War, 1618-1648. In the early part of the nineteenth century, it was revived in Germany and various theories as to the nature, mode and limitation of the Kenosis were set forth. The chief contention was whether in the incarnation the Son of God abandoned the use *(kresis)* of His divine attributes rather than the possession *(ktesis)*. Dr. Howard Crosby took an active part in the controversy in this country. He held that the Son of God reduced Himself to the dimensions of humanity, to a state of dormancy. His Godhead was therefore in a state of quiescency during His humiliation and awoke with the resurrection, after which the divine overshadowed the human.

The true scriptural doctrine on this point teaches that in the Kenosis the Logos did not *divest* Himself of His divine Being but that He *renounced* the use of the divine attributes. He possessed them; He was not one moment without them. He could have used them directly as He did indirectly, for whenever He spoke or acted He always wrought by the Holy Spirit. Van Oosterzee

says: "The Son of God, having become truly man, manifests His Divine attributes only in a human, i.e., a relative way. The personal use of these attributes remains unchanged, if indeed He remains the Logos; but in the Kenosis the manifestations of His attributes are largely modified. Hence it is quite correct to speak with reference to the Logos of a self-limitation in consequence of which as man He manifests His glory in the earth, not absolutely and adequately but relatively and approximately. Undoubtedly the Logos was omniscient and omnipotent (John 5:19-21), but the Incarnate Son clearly shows that He did not immediately know everything *accidental* and that, though peculiarly limited in the use of omnipotence, He is not limited in its possession" (*Systematic Theology*, II, 451, Dutch ed.).

The Nature of the Kenosis

The subject of the Kenosis was the Son of God. The Kenosis, or self-emptying, cannot refer to the God-man, for He never was in the form of God, but must refer to the Son of God, who had glory with the Father before the world began. Paul records that He, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but *emptied Himself*. This self-emptying was a personal act. The Logos *emptied* Himself. That is the word chosen by the Holy Spirit to embody this fact, and its meaning may not be weakened. In Second Corinthians 8:9 Paul expresses the same thing in different terms: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Hence He emptied Himself of His riches and became poor. His self-emptying then was self-impoverishment. And the Gospels relate the extent of His poverty; how extremely poor, bereft of everything He became. Moreover it was a *self*-emptying. In the

Greek the reflexive "self" precedes the verb, giving greater emphasis to the fact of His self-emptying. There was no compulsion whatever about it. True, the self-emptying belongs to the eternal counsel, but that did not make it compulsory to Him, for He Himself, the Logos, was in that council, and with the Father and the Holy Spirit decreed and planned His own self-emptying. When He spake of His laying down His life and taking it again as a commandment which He had received of His Father (John 10:18), He spoke not as the Logos but as the Logos *incarnate*, in the state of humiliation. As the Logos He was not commanded, but in the fullness of time voluntarily emptied Himself and took upon Himself the form of a servant. Neither was it the divine will which acted as a compulsory force. It was the holy Trinity which decreed the incarnation; hence it was the *will* of God, which is *one*. And that again was His own will, for He is the Second Person in the holy Trinity, in perfect equality with the First and the Third. In the Godhead there can be no contrast nor difference. God is One. Hence the Son of God was absolutely free in the act of the self-emptying. It was in perfect harmony with all that pertains to the Godhead. Sings the Psalmist, "Our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (Psa. 115:3). Wonderful statement! And since He always acts in perfect agreement with His own Nature, it was not an arbitrary act. Neither did it violate any of the divine attributes or properties. It was an act perfectly proper and worthy of God. Or, we may put it in this way: The nature of the self-emptying was in full agreement with the divine nature, wholly consistent with that nature. Its unity is left intact; its holiness, its righteousness are honored; its love is magnified. New attributes, which otherwise would have remained wholly unknown to us, were revealed in a most surprising and glorious way–that the Lord is merciful and gracious,

slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and truth. His longsuffering and forbearance, His patience and compassion, all these blessed qualities of His redeeming love are revealed and magnified in the marvel of the incarnation. Without the incarnation there would have been no redemption, and it is only in the redemptive work that these gracious qualities are revealed and come into play.

The Limit of the Kenosis

In the divine Being humanly speaking we may distinguish between the essential and the non-essential. Essential to God is His own Being and all its attributes. Non-essential we may call His glory and splendor, which are the out-shining, the marvelous reflection of His Being in creation. Before the creation which is the *manifestation* of His glory and not its *multiplication,* His glory was not manifested beyond the heaven of heavens, which is His dwelling-place. This did not affect His essential Deity which remains unchangeable. Neither can His glory be revealed to the sinner, weakened and blinded by sin; hence His glory as seen in heaven is not visible in the earth, yet we believe in His Omnipresence, not as potential but as essential. And so in the Kenosis the Logos emptied Himself not of the essential but of the non-essential. He renounced the divine glory and its majesty, its enjoyment and splendors, but not the essential Deity. Neither did He lay aside His divine attributes. He *laid nothing aside,* but He assumed something—our humanity. Even His glory and majesty, properly speaking, He laid not aside, but covered them with His humanity. He emptied Himself of their outshining beauty and of all their joy and felicity. All that belongs to God essentially belongs to Him and cannot be laid aside without marring His infinite

perfections, and that is unthinkable. The Logos, therefore, continued to be the Second Person in the Holy Trinity. In emptying Himself He did not cease from being God. God can do nothing that is contrary to His rational and moral Nature. He cannot deny Himself. What would have become of the world, of all creation, of the government of the world through the Logos, if the Son by whom all things consist, had emptied Himself of His eternal Godhead? And since He continued in the state of humiliation thirty-three and a half years, what would have become of the vital relations between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Would the Eternal Generation of the Son have ceased, together with the Procession of the Holy Spirit, which is equally from the Son as from the Father? Jehovah said: "I change not." "With (him) is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

As to His divine attributes, do we not see them gloriously manifested in His life on earth? His absolute holiness, His unalterable justice, His love which knoweth no change, no partiality, no limitation? And are these *moral* attributes not just as much essential as those that are metaphysical and intellectual–omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience? What are the attributes but the qualities of His Being? Can you separate physical or moral *qualities* from the substance or being to which they belong? Or, consider them as *modes* of His existence–His omniscience which is Himself knowing all things; His love which is Himself forever loving all things. Can these be separated and each exist independent of the other? Love separated from God? His goodness from His Being? Impossible! Therefore, in His self-emptying He did not lay aside His eternal Deity nor the attributes which belong to it. Though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor. His riches consisted in His glory and majesty, their beauty and splendor, together with the ineffable joy

and felicity of their immediate possession. And these He renounced and thus became poor. His poverty consisted in the state of dependence proper to humanity, the individual limitations of man–His legal status and condition as their Representative and Substitute, His appearing among men in the likeness of sinful flesh, together with all the inevitable results which followed. These riches He exchanged for our poverty. That is what Paul calls His self-emptying.

Two questions remain to be considered, questions which have occupied devout and thoughtful minds. It is the devout mind especially which desires to look deeply into the nature of things revealed, knowing that He Who created the mind and its longing to launch out into the deep, will also reward it with a big draught of glorious discoveries; but always must it search in the humble spirit of loyalty to the truth as it is in Jesus.

The questions are: *first,* how could the Son of God become man and yet remain truly God? and *second,* how could man become united to the Son of God and remain a real man?

With reference to the former, let us first define the meaning of the word "become" in John 1:14, "The Word became flesh." The statement does not indicate that in the incarnation the divine Essence was converted into the human; nor that God ceased from being God and became man–in other words that the Infinite became finite, the Eternal temporal, the Creator a creature. The evolutionist would gladly have it so, for that would support his contention that the Son of God became man by retrogression, only to enable man to become God by progression. But such is not the meaning of this Scripture. Such a thing is absurd; the very thought is impious. "The word *become,*" says Godet, "when it has a substance for its predicate implies a profound transformation in the subject's mode of being." Thus John 2:9, "The water

became wine." When a person is in question, this word *become*, without implicating his identity, indicates that he has changed his condition; for example, "The king becomes a shepherd." And Reuss, quoted by Godet, says: "There is nothing but the word *become* which positively affirms that in coming He changed the form of His existence." And with Godet we affirm nothing more and nothing less. "The word *become* shows indeed that this change reached even the foundation of the existence of the Logos." And this is the vital point which covers the question under discussion. He laid aside the *form* of His existence, but not His *existence*. He remained what He was and had been in eternity. Being in the form of God, He took upon Him the form of a servant. He did not add humanity to His Deity, for to that nothing can be added; but He united Himself to humanity. Not merely to a human body was He united to serve Him temporarily as a covering to hide His Godhead, but He became *flesh*. The word *flesh* in this connection designates the entire human being: soul and body not temporarily, but permanently.

And in His becoming man there was nothing unbecoming to God, not anything in the least unworthy of Him. He added nothing to His own honor and glory, for they are complete, but He did exceedingly honor man, who is the bearer of His own image in all the earth. He united Himself to a creature that was *inferior* to Himself but not *foreign*, such as one of the lower creation would have been. And since the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world, i.e., from eternity, this very act of the Son of God becoming flesh was determined in the divine council. With God there are no afterthoughts, no expedients to extricate Himself from unexpected, unforeseen difficulties. The whole structure of our salvation and all the means of its execution were before ordained by that Wisdom which always selects the best

means to attain the highest end. And surely God would not ordain that which is unworthy of Himself or antagonistic to His nature or character. We have seen already that the nature of the Kenosis is in perfect harmony with the nature of God. Neither is there anything derogatory in it to His own Godhead. He did not act under compulsion. If human misery compelled His divine mercy, His mercy ordained salvation long before that misery existed. We repeat: "Our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." And not only is there nothing derogatory in it, but in the incarnation of His beloved Son, He has manifested His glory and magnified His Name even more exceedingly than in all the works of creation.

With reference to the second question, How could man become united to the Son of God and yet remain true man?—we have only to repeat and to consider that man is created in the image of God. The Scripture does not support the idea that man was created in the image of *Christ;* but we may believe that he was created in the image of the *Son of God,* which is quite another matter. In the *recreation* man is conformed to the image of Christ; in the original creation, he was created in the image of God, or as we believe, in the image of the Son. For in Hebrews 1:3 the Son is emphatically called "the express image of his (God's) person (substance, Gr.)." If then the Son is the image of the Triune God and man is created in that very image, the image of the Triune God, then may we not say that He was created in the image of the Son? Kuyper says: "Even outside the counsel of redemption humanity was related to the Son. The Father saith: The Son is daily my delight. The Son answers: My delights were with the sons of men (Prov. 8:30, 31). Even before the fact of sin had been mentioned John testified in his Prologue, that in the Logos there was life and the life was the light of men (John 1:4).

The Son is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15) and it was after this image that man was created" (*Out of the Word*, I, 340). This being correct, we see a close relation between the Son of God and man created after His image. And this may be the reason why He has been called "eternally the Primal and Archetypal Man"; and that in his creation man was pre-disposed to be united to the Son of God. However, we do not accept this as *the* reason that there would have been an incarnation of the Son of God apart from sin; because for this we find no ground whatever in the Scripture.

And again, there must be a close relation between the Son of God and man owing to the *unity of creation*. Creation, in all its wonderful diversity, is a unit, and existed from eternity in the Mind of its Creator. This unity is apparent not only from the fact of the overlapping of the boundaries of the three kingdoms in nature (the mineral overlapping the vegetable, etc.) but also from the fact that one kingdom is in many respects a *prefiguration* of the other. The mineral kingdom contains prefigurations of the vegetable kingdom, and that again of the animal. The latter certainly as a forecast of man, is approximately created in the image of man. If then man was created in the image of the Son, the Son may be called a prefiguration of man; and in the incarnation the human nature not only remained intact but received the fulfillment of the promise contained in the creation of man's being and constitution.

It is quite probable that these two and similar questions were the result of the unscriptural theory regarding the union of the Logos with humanity. If in that union there was a blending of the divine with the human so that the divine became humanized and the human deified, then indeed both the divine and the human natures were marred and each was robbed of its respective identity, purity and unity. In that case there must have

been a communication of attributes or properties of the one nature to the other or to the whole person. And we do not wonder that on this ground the incarnation has been rejected as irrational, unscientific and impossible. But this whole representation is erroneous, as we shall see in the treatment of this subject in another lecture. The Person of the Son *united* Himself with human nature. *United* is the word, not *blended*. In *union* each combined element retains its individuality and integrity; the lines of demarcation are rigidly retained and never lost. In *blending*, the lines are effaced and the result is a third element or substance, a tertium quid. Water, for instance, is a compound of hydrogen and oxygen. These two gasses in proper proportions absorb each other, are blended, and water is the result. The blending of lye and fat produces soap, a third substance, being neither fat nor lye. So it is said by the Pantheist that in Christ the divine and human natures were blended, became mixed, the human became divine and the divine human, and the result was a third element, a divine-human nature, which was in fact neither the one nor the other.

And this is the underlying error of all Pantheism. Pantheism seeks to efface all the lines divinely ordained in creation, which it denies. You find this error in many forms in the theosophies of the East and in the more recent isms of the West. If this representation were correct, then of course the incarnation would have marred if not destroyed both the divine and human natures. But it is wholly contrary to all the teaching of Scripture on the subject. The two natures in His divine Person were united; not blended. Although the union of the two is most intimate and indissoluble, yet each retains absolutely its own peculiar properties. The lines of demarcation are never obliterated. As Man, Christ retains all the original human limitations; according to His Deity He is without limitations, i.e.,

infinite. As Man, He is ignorant of some things (Matt. 24:36) and He is not omnipresent (John 11:21). These attributes belong only to His divine Person. In His glorification the two natures remain in closest union, yet each retains its own peculiar characteristics; the human nature is still human, in full possession of all its original human marks and features, and its original limitations were certainly not exceeded in the glorification.

Was the incarnation of our Lord a real humbling of Himself? The sacred Scriptures teach us that in the incarnation the Son of God "humbled himself." Paul clearly states this in Philippians 2:6-8: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

In those wonderful words Paul describes a two-fold act of the Son of God: *First,* His emptying Himself of the divine form, i.e., His divine glory and majesty, and His assuming the form of a servant; second, His humbling Himself to the death of the cross. The words used are "emptying" *(kenosis)* and "humbling" *(tapeinosis).* The first is the stronger of the two, denoting an act greater than that of mere humbling. It was the descent from *the throne* to the *lowest parts* of the earth (Psa. 139:15), i.e., the womb of the virgin: the descent from heaven's royal palace and glory to the humble manger at Bethlehem in Judea. The second act was from the form of a servant to that of a criminal worthy of death, and that in the cruellest and most degrading form. And then Paul goes on to declare: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name"

(v. 9). This is exaltation as the logical outcome of the previous humiliation.

This is the clear and simple teaching of the Scriptures which has been received by the Christian Church during the ages of her earthly career as a most precious part of the truth of our redemption. But now Modernism denies this. According to the new teaching, the incarnation of the Son of God was not a self-humiliation. The motive of the incarnation was not man's redemption but the advancement of created life to its highest logical development. We notice the evolutionary process in nature which is as follows: Particles of ether become matter; matter assumes the form of minerals; then minerals become plants. The plant develops into an animal; the animal becomes man and man becomes God? No, in the incarnation God becomes man or the God-man. This last step however did not humble God. Man is so disposed that the humanization of God does not humble God, but deifies man. "Perfect union between God and man," says Morsley, "according to God's manifest plan of working along human lines, could only be achieved by such a method, and sin made it increasingly needful" (*Theology of the Church of England*, p. 38). Man is so great and his destiny so exalted that it required the incarnation of the Word to realize this greatness. Is not man bearer of the divine image? Is he not God's offspring, a son of God? Is not God his Father? Has he not, by a wonderful process of self-development, already attained a height of evolution which is truly marvelous and which now enables him to scan the distant horizon where identity with the divine substance, the very deification of his human nature is awaiting him? How, then, can it be said that the Son of God, by assuming this glorious humanity, humbled Himself? This is surely not flattering to man, neither does it glorify God whose masterpiece he is.

True, it is acknowledged that to a certain extent there was some humbling in this act of the incarnation; for He did lay aside the majesty of the Logos and lived after the manner of man; and, appearing as the son of man, He was confined to the limitations of the human individuality, retaining His Deity in the limited form of the human consciousness. But, at the same time says Modernism, "Let it be acknowledged, and with equal emphasis, that only as the *Son of Man* did He conquer all of His *divine* glory. Hence, it was only an *apparent* humiliation; in reality it was a step to attain the completion of His divine glory. By becoming man, He really became possessed of the complete glory of God. Moreover, the Lord Jesus Christ never divested Himself from His humanity but remained united with it forever. If, then, by His incarnation, He humbled Himself, it follows that the same humiliation must now be upon Him; and how can that be reconciled with what the Scriptures declare regarding the matchless glory which is His at the Father's right hand?"

Without dwelling upon the various errors contained in these condensed statements, let us see what the Word of God teaches us regarding this matter. First however let us consider what the conscious or unconscious motive is of the denial that the Kenosis was an act of self-humbling to the Son of God. As we have stated before, with the modernists the incarnation finds its central factor in the human personality. The greatness of this personality and its gradual development into higher greatness, when it shall scale the very heights of equality with God, is the vivid dream of their Gospel of the Incarnation. The most marked feature of the divine image is the human personality. There is personality in God; therefore it is found in man. And that personality was invested with royal dominion over all creation. Hence the human personality is king of

creation. True, by an unfortunate mistake on his part the disturbing element of sin came to check its immediate progress. But after all, does not the history of men and nations prove, that, what we call the Fall, was a step in the right direction, teaching man the difference between right and wrong; a distinction which as a moral agent he must know; and how could he know it but by actual experience? Made wiser by his temporary disadvantage he has been ascending higher, until now some noble, advanced thinkers see the Golden Age of completed human attainment in the future, perhaps less distant than we think. Not to speak of material progress and development, what wonderful advances have been made in the moral life of men and nations. One evil practice after another has been abolished. Slavery is no more, Prohibition has been written into the Federal Constitution, woman has been restored to her legitimate place in society and state: and now the noblest and wisest minds are taking counsel together to abolish war, and to make it possible for universal peace and good will among men to have supreme dominion. All this is the achievement of the human personality. As you read history, you clearly see that the real upward tendency began with the incarnation, plainly demonstrating the close connection between the two. The incarnation furnished the impetus needed to animate and inspire the human personality in its mighty endeavors to reach the goal of its own and the world's emancipation from all forms of barbarism, superstition, moral corruption, etc. And therefore, the human personality must be exalted, honored, magnified. All that opposes this must be silenced, ignored, ostracized, if need be crucified!

Do we exaggerate? Can we exaggerate in this respect? Was it not this very spirit which crucified our Lord? We cannot doubt it. It is the same spirit which in the king of Babylon cried out: "Is not this the great Babylon

which I have built?" It is the very spirit which changed Lucifer, the Son of the Morning, into Satan, the adversary of God, His Christ and His Church. It is the spirit spoken of in Psalm 73:6, 8, 9: "Pride compasseth them about as a chain . . . they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth." It is the spirit of the man who said a hundred years ago, "What are the lives of a million men to a man like me?"

And it is the doctrine of the humbling of the Logos in the incarnation which opposes and exposes this spirit. The incarnation took place, not to honor, glorify, and exalt the sinful human personality but to humble it, to break its pride, to expose its sin, and, in the human nature to condemn sin and the human nature itself as a love of sin. In the human nature it was the human person that had sinned. The human person had forgotten his place and position under God, forgotten that he was *image* and not *original*. Satan's suggestion to Eve of being like God touched the vital point; it was there that she was most vulnerable and exposed. *To be like God, to be God, to be on the throne in the place of God, behold, this is the essence of sin by which the human personality has been poisoned unto death.*

Now then, to save the human personality from this awful delusion, to bring it back to its proper position of being the image of God, the Son of God adopted the human nature and united it in closest intimacy to Himself. It was a union whereby the Creator wedded Himself as it were, to what once was His loveliest creation, and thereby exceedingly honored it. It was a union of highest Love. And what do we see? In that union we find the human personality not *equal* with God, as Modernism might have expected, but in such subordination to Him, that in the blessed union it became obscured and apparently impersonal. And *so* it was restored to its

proper place and position which man in his pride had utterly repudiated. And in this restoration it entered again its highest state of glory and dignity. The pure, holy human personality does not ask to put self in the foreground. Its supreme joy and crown of glory is to let God be first and last, always and everywhere; and to allow self no standing, save as found in Him.

Oh, what a lesson the doctrine of "A human nature, not a human person" contains. In the God-man we see the true and proper relation of the human to the divine objectified. Not annihilated, oh, no, never that. For man's personality is the embodiment of God's noblest thought. But it is only noble, great, beautiful and radiant with loveliness, when it occupies its proper position as God's mirror, wherein He beholds His own glorious reflection. Then man is at his best and highest when the reflection of the Triune God appears in him perfect and complete. Then he is truly man; then he occupies his true position. And then, to put it tersely, in his estimation *God is first, the neighbor next, and self last or nowhere,* if God so wills it. And such was the relation of the human personality in the God-man. In Him the relative position of the human personality became fullest actuality. When He comes, He saith: "Lo, I come . . . I delight to do thy will, O my God!" (Psa. 40:7, 8). The ground-tone of His whole being was, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And so He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. So He became a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." In Him our humanity became *cherem*[6] the thing that could not be redeemed, and could only be devoted to death. In Him the human personality was crucified, dead and buried. Oh, the humbling of that being buried! For the proud personality of man to return to the dust whence it came; to be

covered with the dust, in the dust to be dissolved, when body and soul part company–its body a corpse, its spirit a ghost–that was the humbling of the human personality in Christ when He poured out His soul into death. Do you wonder why Modernism denies the humbling of the Logos in the incarnation?

Was the incarnation a real humbling to the Son of God? In answer to this question which Modernism has raised and answered in the negative, we must turn to the Scripture for instruction and decision. And the Word plainly declares that He *emptied* Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant. Whether He humbled Himself or not depends upon what we understand by the word "servant." It is said by those who deny this humbling that the term "servant" properly applies to man only in his *sinful* state, and that in his *sinless* state he would not be a *true* servant. But we do not find it so in the Word. Sin has caused many a change in man's status and condition, but not in this respect. We find the redeemed children of God called servants just as much as those not redeemed. The Lord Jesus shall say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Paul writes to the Romans (6:17, 18), "God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." And again in First Corinthians 7:22, the apostle states the case very plainly: "For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant." In Revelation 7:15 we read, "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." And again in 22:3, "His servants shall serve him." Hence man is a servant not only as a sinner but as man. Yea, it is his high calling to be the servant of God.

Before the fall Adam was God's servant. The holy Apostles under the New Covenant delighted in calling themselves servants (*douloi*, bond-slaves) of Jesus Christ. The unregenerate refuse Him service; His saints once more are restored to their high, original calling. In whatever state or condition, however high and holy, even as one redeemed from sin, man remains a servant. Just because in Christ he is a son, he is all the more pleased to be His servant. Hence we conclude that man is a servant not only as a sinner, but this title belongs to his original order and being, according to the divine ordinance. The Son of God would therefore not have been a true man if He had not taken upon Him the form of a servant. In the Old Testament prophecies He is therefore again and again predicted as the Servant of Jehovah.

And for man as such there is in this divine ordinance nothing humiliating. Even as the angels that excel in strength do His pleasure, hearkening unto the voice of His Word in the spiritual world and around the throne, so man is ordained to be His servant in the earth. All creation serves Him, the very laws of nature (in Scripture called, "Thy ordinances") are all His servants (Psa. 119:91). However their service is unconscious. Man, as creation's head and high priest, takes that service of unconscious praise and offers it to God, as his own sacrifice of conscious service, praise and thanksgiving. But when the Son of God becomes a servant then it means utter condescension and an humbling of Himself greater than we can conceive. The antithesis is so sharp; from the bosom of the Father to be born of a virgin; from heaven's highest glory to lie in a cattle manger, He the Creator to be limited to an individual creaturely existence. Well may St. Augustine cry out, "How great the mercy which laid the form of a servant on the Lord of the world; that the Bread should hunger, Strength be made weak, Health be wounded, and Life die. What

greater mercy than that the Creator should become a creature, the Sovereign become servant, the Reviver be slain!" "What greater mercy," says St. Augustine; we add, What greater humbling!

Emptying and Humbling

Emptying and humbling are not synonymous; together they denote a twofold expression of love; the former is His willingness to become Man, the latter is His readiness to suffer. And the two are inseparable during all His life. In His self-emptying He humbled Himself, and as He humbled Himself more and more deeply, He also emptied Himself of the comforts that still remained, until the deepest humbling was reached, when, being made a curse for us, He suffered and died on the cross and His self-emptying became like that of a broken vessel (Psa. 31:12); He was drained of the last creature comfort, of the last trace of personal honor and dignity; even His God had forsaken Him. Truly He emptied and humbled Himself.

In His subsequent himiliation after the descent from the throne to the manger we notice the following steps: 1) from personal righteousness to judicial condemnation; 2) to crucifixion and death; 3) to burial and descent into Hades. And that was the end–lower depths He could not reach. He had emptied the cup which the Father had given Him to drink to the very dregs. Then, indeed, as He had said already on the cross, it was finished. "The end is reached" (*tetelestai*). With the resurrection began the rapid process of exaltation. On the third day He rose again from the dead; on the fortieth day He ascended into Heaven; and then the Father "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only

in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:21, 22).

The human nature may be found in one of four conditions: 1) the original condition wherein God created Adam—sinless but not glorified; 2) the fallen condition wherein we are living—sinful, corrupt but not hopeless; 3) the lost condition in hell—corrupt, hopeless; 4) the glorified condition—glorified like Jesus our Lord.

If it had pleased God, His dear Son could have entered His glorified humanity without partaking of our present condition, and that would have been without humiliation. But in that case He could not have been our Mediator and Redeemer. In order to be our Redeemer and work out our redemption, He necessarily was subjected to the humiliation of which the Scripture speaks. And when this was finished, when death was swallowed up in victory, and He entered the condition of the glorified human nature, then all humiliation was excluded forever.

In His human body, raised from the dead, He ascended unto Heaven. In His human nature He sits at the Father's right hand. He represents us in that human nature as our Advocate with the Father and as the pledge and promise of our own blessed resurrection and glorification. And here the question suggests itself: If the Son of God in assuming the human nature humbled Himself, how can He now be on the throne, not in humiliation but in glory?

And this question is important. It is the basic thought of the denial of Christ's humiliation. If Christ by His incarnation humbled Himself, then He must remain humbled so long as He remains incarnate; and since He retains our human nature even upon the throne *in glory*, what became of His humiliation? Therefore there never was a humiliation.

In reply we say that there is an apparent contradiction. The Scripture states 1) that He emptied Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant, and that was humiliation; and 2) that now although He still remains united with our human nature He is highly exalted in glory. And this apparent contradiction must be solved, of course, upon scriptural grounds.

Surely, there is a distinction between the essential, original lowliness of the human nature, for it is finite, and the humiliation which is not essential but is caused by the sin and shame of the fall, which made it a corrupt nature. In the incarnation the Logos partook of both. Not only did He become man but He took upon Himself the sinner's condemnation. Not only did He become flesh but God sent Him in the likeness of sinful flesh. He was not only born of a woman but under the law and its condemnation; He became a curse for us that He might redeem us that were under the law.

And what did He do to overcome this twofold humiliation?

With reference to the latter, by His death and resurrection He removed it, completely eliminated it. That awful *reproach* of sin and shame He forever annihilated. Nay, more than that, He exceedingly *glorified* the human nature. By His resurrection He restored to it its original deathlessness and *added incorruptibility* (II Tim. 1:10, Gr.). In our human nature thus already honored, He ascended unto heaven, where He sat down at the right hand of the Father far above all principalities and powers and might and dominion and every name that is named not only in this world but also in that which is to come. And so He heaped upon our human nature honor upon honor, glory upon glory. Not a trace of its former humiliation remained.

And as to the humiliation caused by the Kenosis, that of being a servant, Christ Himself gives us the key

to the solution in that touching petition of His priestly prayer, which affords us such insight into His inner life: "Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5). And the Father heard that petition and glorified Him in restoring to Him in the exaltation the original glory belonging to Him as the eternal Son of God. In the light of this fact may we not conclude, that since the humbling consisted in the self-emptying and in the adoption of the human nature, it follows that it was wholly removed when the Kenosis ceased, and all the glory and majesty of His Godhead were manifested, scintillating once more with their uncovered glory. Then also the human nature no longer in the likeness of sinful flesh, even though still and forever the servant of God, had unfolded its own, to us still unknown, glory and beauty, wholly excluding the last trace of humiliation. The exaltation of His glorified humanity must evidently possess the conditions which forever eliminate the former lowliness of being the Servant of God.

Glorification and Exaltation

It is essential that we distinguish between Christ's glorification and exaltation. We shall share the *former*, but not the *latter*. His exaltation is wholly unique, and can belong only to the God-Man, our Redeemer and Mediator, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, who is the most worthy object of the worship and adoration of redeemed men and of angels. We can never share His exaltation. We can only behold it and rejoice in it with joy unspeakable and full of glory. But we shall share His glorification. He assures us by the Apostle Paul, not that He will fashion our human *nature* like unto His own *exalted* nature, but that He will change the *body* of our humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body (Phil. 3:21).

It has been objected that humiliation implies change, and since the Godhead is unchangeable, with "neither shadow of turning," there could have been no humiliation in the incarnation. The correctness of this objection depends upon what we hold regarding the self-emptying of the Son. If we hold that in the incarnation the Son divested Himself of His eternal glory, then indeed there was a change which in God the Son is unthinkable. But if we hold with the Scripture that He *covered* His glory with the veil of His flesh, His humanity, then there is no change. Whether covered or uncovered the glory remains the same. His glory and majesty belong to the Divine Essence and cannot be separated from it any more than light can be separated from the sun. But a cloud can hide, and night completely obscure, the radiance. And this is precisely what took place in the incarnation: by taking upon Him the form of a servant He completely covered the form of God, which is the divine glory and majesty. The self-emptying belongs not to the God-Man, the Incarnate Word, for He never was in the form of God, but to the Logos without the flesh. And this is admitted by the Greek fathers and by the best modern commentators, Lutherans as well as Reformed. In the Mediator it is not a human person clothed with Deity, but the Second Person in the Trinity clothed with humanity and appearing among us as the Head of a new race. Men never doubted His humanity, and they never suspected His Deity. The divine nature was not perceived in Him.

Now as He so humbled Himself, laying aside His *rightful* greatness that belonged to Him from eternity, He set us an example of emptying ourselves of our *imagined* greatness. Every act and every step which He took must have a counterpart in our experience. What Christ did *for* us, He must do *in* us. There must be a complete humbling of ourselves in the dust; then He shall take us and glorify us with Himself.

CHAPTER 6

IN THE LIKENESS OF SINFUL FLESH

(Romans 8:3)

The humiliation of Christ is to us unfathomable. What it must have been to Him we cannot begin to realize. Yet He is not a stranger to us; His sufferings should not leave us cold and indifferent. If He so loved us and we profess to love Him, then we should feel mightily attracted to this subject. It is good, wholesome and useful to follow Him step by step into the abyss of His self-emptying, humbling and self-abnegation, in order to have some conception of what it cost Him to save us from death and sin's destruction. And also, we ought to learn how every one of these downward steps has a corresponding act of faith in our own spiritual life and experience. For if He, the holy, the spotless Son of God completely emptied Himself of His rightful greatness and glory, how much more ought we by His grace, to divest ourselves of our imagined greatness, self-righteousness and self-boasting.

He entered the human nature and made it His own. Not by *mechanically* putting Himself into our place, like those devoted Moravian brethren who, in order to preach the gospel to slaves, sold themselves into slavery, but *organically,* by a holy human birth.

And now the question naturally arises: In which of its forms did He take our humanity upon Himself? There is a four-fold form in which our human nature may appear. Was His human nature in the likeness of Adam's holy flesh–physically and otherwise as Adam came forth from

the hand of his Maker? Read what Paul says in Romans 8:3, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son *in the likeness of sinful flesh.*" Not in the likeness of *holy* flesh, but as *sinful* flesh, i.e., in the sinful human nature which for 4,000 years had endured the ravages, the destructive influences, the impoverishing effects of sin. Understand this well. Paul says, "in the *likeness,*" not "*in* sinful flesh." He became like unto His brethren in all things (Hebrews 2:17), always *sin* excepted. So it behooved Him. If theirs *is* the sinful flesh, then He must come in the *likeness* of sinful flesh. It means that He assumed from His mother a human nature such as *she* had it, yet without sin, owing to the holy conception, the human nature such as 4,000 years spent in sin had caused it to become. Does Scripture give us any description of this condition?

Psalm 90 gives us a vivid picture of its general weakness, frailty, mortality, shortness of life. "Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. . . . For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore and ten, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." And Psalm 39:4, 5: "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. . . . Verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity." Likewise, many other scriptures make this point.

And all this is said of human nature by Him who knows it better than we do. It is weak, a victim of disease, exposed to all the destructive forces of the elements and the ravages of time, and a prey of death. And back

of all these. "We are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled" (Psa. 90:7). Such is the condition of sinful human nature. Its spiritual poverty is beyond words; it is devoid of all spiritual good. "I know that in me (that is in my flesh - sinful flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). "Knowest not," says Christ to the church of Laodicea, "that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and naked?" (Rev. 3:17). This is the comprehensive description of sinful human nature, our nature, Mary's nature, the nature of His brethren, and therefore, the nature which He assumed out of His mother, without sin. All the results of sin found in that nature belonged to His nature, all its weaknesses, natural frailty and mortality. Think of His weakness, His utter helplessness, and absolute dependence as a newborn babe in need of the mother's milk; as an infant a year old, trying to walk, to talk, to do as His mother did. Surely, He was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, such as we see it in the infant, the child, the growing lad, only without sin. Think of His dependence as a child of a carpenter in Nazareth, doing His mother's bidding, obeying His foster father, learning his trade.

And in all the subsequent years, especially during His public ministry, He suffered the effects of hunger and thirst, the stress and strain of uninterrupted heat, the plaque of insects that torment the East, the weariness and exhaustion of labor, of cold and the shrinking horror of pain, sorrow and death. During His life in the flesh He suffered the many ills caused by sin. "In all their affliction he was afflicted" (Isa. 63:9). All, except those ills and evils which are the result of *personal* sin. Being without sin, He was without sickness, without any deformity, without organic ailment. He was in every respect a normal man. He was the Antitype of the Paschal lamb which was to be without blemish or broken bone (Ex. 12:5,46), that He might offer Himself through the Eternal

Spirit, without spot, to God (Heb. 9:14; I Pet. 1:19).

Let us emphasize it: He assumed the human nature as we have it today, just as it is. If our humanity in itself is truly miserable, poor, blind and naked, and if under the law Jesus was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, then His human nature in and by itself was just the same, devoid of all spiritual good. Very true, in the holy conception this awful poverty was removed and He was enriched with many spiritual gifts, but they were "gifts," yea gifts of grace–charismata, gifts not by nature His own, no more than naturally they are our own. Yea, even the Lord Jesus had to *live* on gifts of grace. As the Son of Man He joined us in the petition: "Give us this day our daily bread." The only petition not fit for His lips was: "Forgive us our debts." Until the hour of His resurrection, He actually lived by grace, from gifts of grace, and that without for a moment divesting Himself of the native poverty of His human nature. All the glorious excellencies which we see scintillating in Him during the days of His humiliation, all the power, the wisdom, the light, were only gifts graciously bestowed upon His human nature, not the outshining of His divine nature united with it in the holy conception. Yes, truly, though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor, unspeakably poor. He spent His days in poverty; He did not have even a stone whereon to lay His head; the women provided Him with clothes–that through His poverty we might become rich (II Cor. 8:9). Poverty is one of the effects of sin, and there is no such effect which in His priestly capacity He did not suffer. Therefore He was poor. When He needed an animal to make His triumphant entry into Jerusalem He had to borrow one. His disciples were to say to the animal's master, "The *Lord* hath need of him" (Luke 19:31). Even as He borrowed, He was the Lord!

Let us repeat and emphasize the fact that from

moment to moment He accepted life and breath and every comfort of life, every morsel of food, every drop of water, every necessity from the hand of His heavenly Father just as we do. Standing in our place, our legal Representative, in the likeness of our sinful flesh, He *must* be in all things like as we are—not personally, but officially. And we have not merited God's bounties of food, shelter and raiment. To us they are gifts of grace, mercifully bestowed moment by moment. So they were to Him. He too lived by grace; He too received every blessing as a gracious gift, undeserved, unmerited, as one in the likeness of sinful flesh, though personally holy. For He lived and died the Substitute of a fallen, guilty and condemned race. The price of their redemption and of their daily life and necessities He was to pay with His own blood; and until that time He was to live by grace in the deepest, most comprehensive sense of the word, understood by Him alone in its fullest meaning. Of all men living by grace He was the *only* One who fathomed the depth and measured the greatness of that wonderful word "*grace*"; and who accordingly appreciated it as we ought but cannot.

Our Lord's absolute dependence upon His heavenly Father was one of the reasons of His wonderful, touching and ever present sense of dependence upon His heavenly Father. Though famished with hunger He waited upon His Father for bread. When He was about to break bread to the multitude, or to His disciples at the supper table, He gave thanks. Such was His daily practice, His holy habit of thanking the Giver for the gracious gift. He openly acknowledged: "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge" (John 5:30).

And yet in the midst of all this poverty and absolute dependence there was never a word of complaint nor the slightest effort to divest Himself of this native poverty of His human nature. He suffered and endured it

voluntarily, in order that by this very suffering and endurance and the final Sacrifice He might forever remove it. So He endured our poverty that by His poverty we might be rich.

And this condition of habitual poverty continued to the end. And then we find Him more than ever utterly poor and distressed, bereft of the last trace of comfort, without a place in all the earth for the soles of His feet, suspended between earth and heaven, forsaken of God, burdened with the curse, made sin for us although He knew no sin, enduring our penalty, dying our death. So He loved us and gave Himself for us, and therefore, Blessed Lord Jesus, we love Thee for Thou first loved us.

God sent Him in the likeness of sinful flesh. It was only as such that He could redeem us from the curse of the law. If God had sent Him in the likeness of *holy* flesh, in the likeness of the unfallen human nature as Adam possessed it, in all its original glory, power, and greatness, He could not have been our Saviour. He would not have had the capacity for bearing the curse and the cross. Youth, strong and healthy, cannot suffer the infirmities of decrepit old age. This very weakness of the human nature with all its painful effects is part of the penalty. It was this weakness which He shared with us, in His infancy, childhood and manly years, and especially at the end of His life. When the deep shadow of the cross was falling threateningly across His path He cried out, "How am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50). And again: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: But for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12:27). In Gethsemane we hear His cry, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. 26:38). He made the inspired prayer of Psalm 22 His own: "I am a worm, and no man . . . I am poured out like water, and all my

bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd . . . and thou hast brought me into the dust of death" (Psa. 22:6, 14, 15). Every one of these anguished utterances is an expression of conscious weakness. Hence Isaiah said: "He hath borne our griefs" (Isa. 53:4). The Hebrew word rendered "grief" is *"choli"* and in Greek *"atheinias"* both denoting "lack of strength, weakness, infirmity," and Paul confirms this when he says, "He was crucified through *weakness"* (II Cor. 13:4). "This passage is not to be interpreted an *apparent* weakness, but finds its explanation in II Cor. 8:9, Phil. 2:7" (Meyer). The work was finished, the end was reached *(tetelestai)* and He bowed the head and give up the spirit.

From all this we see that God indeed sent forth His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.

However, the weakness of His human nature affected Him physically more than mentally and spiritually. Though the human nature comprises the material and the immaterial, there is a distinction. The material body is a *mediate* creation, which we receive through generation from our parents. Not so the immaterial, soul and spirit. This is an *immediate* creation. Hence "we come forth from His hand pure and undefiled. Sin therefore, especially original sin, does not originate in our creation by the hand of God, but by our vital relation with the sinful race. Our person does not proceed from our parents" (Kuyper, *Work of the Holy Spirit*, p. 86).

And the question, how does sin find its way to our persons–who are conceived and born in sin, finds its answer in the fact that sin attaches to our nature only because that nature is connected with our personal ego (Kuyper). It is not my nature that sins, but my person.

But Christ was not conceived and born in sin,

neither was His ego connected with the human nature, for it was the ego of the Son of God, and therefore was never touched by this defilement. Hence, mentally and spiritually He did not partake of the weakness of the sinful human nature in the same degree as physically. His mental powers must have possessed all their original brightness and keenness of vision and penetration so that He may have known what was in man (John 2:24) even apart from His divine omniscience. And this is even more so of His spiritual nature, which was constantly being supported, animated and strengthened by His uninterrupted fellowship with the Father.

And yet to some limited extent, even these powers must have been affected by the weaknesses of His adopted nature which was in the likeness of sinful flesh. From our own experience and that of others, we know how painfully bodily weariness, weakness or illness may work upon the mind and spirit. The book of Job illustrates this point. Without affliction Job would not have written the book which we now possess of him. And it is this influence which we can trace in the temptations of Christ.

But however great and real the weakness of His nature may have been, it was never a *sinful* weakness. Flesh and blood by themselves do not sin. The seat of sin is the soul; flesh and blood are but the soul's instruments. To suppose that the flesh and blood of our Lord, though it was made in the likeness of sinful flesh and for that reason could have had any evil tendency or inclination, is to touch the holiness and purity of His soul and denies the fact of His intimate union with the Son of God; and, in the same way, denies that He was endowed with the absolute fullness of spiritual gifts, for He had the Spirit without measure. The Holy Spirit descended upon Him and abode with Him. Hence He was *as* one of us, but not one of us. In all points was He

tempted like as we are, yet without sin. And therefore He would and was able to deliver our human nature from its sins and weaknesses. As He was sent forth in the likeness of sinful flesh, so is He now transforming us by the indwelling Spirit into the likeness of His holy flesh.

Was the Lord Jesus subject to these weaknesses *necessarily* or *voluntarily*? With us it is necessarily. We may for a short time—by sheer will power—deny the physical demands of our human nature, but not permanently. With reference to the Lord Jesus it was different. His subjection to the demands of our human nature was not a matter of necessity because He was the Son of God. He could have ignored them for He had the power. He could have severed the connection as intolerable; but having voluntarily assumed our flesh and blood with all their weaknesses, He voluntarily determined that His divine omnipotence should not relieve Him of these weaknesses.

And this is the point that should be emphasized. Though He knew all about our human nature and what its demands, necessities and weaknesses are, though He knew with perfect knowledge how utterly wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked it had become by sin, yet so unthinkably great was His love and compassion that wholly voluntarily, without any stress of necessity from without, He assumed our humanity, identified Himself with it, tabernacled in it for thirty-three and a half years, with it completely covered His divine glory and majesty, and made it the instrument of its own redemption, and, by His infinite sacrifice cleansed, renewed, uplifted and restored it to a glory and honor more excellent than that of holy Adam in Paradise.

CHAPTER 7

THE LEGAL STATUS AND CONDITION OF OUR LORD

In the humiliation of our Lord we notice the following steps: 1) from the throne to manger; 2) from personal righteousness to judicial guilt and condemnation. These steps follow in the order of thought, not of time. He was never without His personal righteousness; He was born under judicial condemnation.

In Galatians 4:4-6 Paul states the object of His incarnation: "God sent forth his Son, made (born) of a woman, made (born) under the law, to redeem them that were under the law . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons." In Galatians 3:13 the apostle defines this more in detail: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." From this it is clear that Christ came into the world to suffer death as our Substitute. He took our place under the law, not at some time during His life on earth, to *become* our substitute, but He was *born* as such. There never was a moment in His life that He was not our God-given Saviour. Before His holy birth He was called "Jesus, that is, Saviour."

Notice the emphatic statement in Galatians 4:4: "born of a woman, born under the law." "We retain the twice used 'born,' otherwise the vivid emphasis of this word is lost," says Meyer. When He first saw the light of day, He was already subject to the law, broken by the sin of His people. He too, as one of them, a Jew,

stood under the condemnation of the law. In the absence of an earthly father, His mother's legal status was His. A slave's son is a slave. His being circumcised on the eighth day proves that He was born under the law. By His circumcision He was made a member of the Abrahamic Covenant of which covenant circumcision was the seal. Hence He was born outside the covenant, as others. And in similar manner was His baptism, when He was thirty years old, the initiatory rite whereby He was introduced into the kingdom of God. "In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren" and they are born outside the heavenly kingdom. In order to pass from the national kingdom of shadows into the heavenly kingdom of realities, He had to pass through the water of baptism. Therefore He was baptized not only with water, but with the Holy Spirit and with fire, i.e., with the complete baptism of the kingdom. He was the only one that received that complete baptism before the ascension. Christ's baptism therefore was a priestly act, whereby He voluntarily identified Himself with our sins and guilt and death. His incarnation demanded it and as such it remains the root and the example of the baptism of all believers. Not as a Person was He baptized, but as the Mediator for us and for our sakes. Hence from His baptism does our baptism derive all its force and eternal value.

And all this is the positive proof that before God *our* legal status was *His* legal status from the moment of His holy conception and birth.

And what is that status?

"By legal status we understand a man's relation to the law, whether he is just or unjust, law-abiding or law-breaking. So long as the law has not proven him guilty, has not convicted and sentenced him, his legal status is that of a free and law-abiding citizen. But as soon as his guilt is proven in court and the jury has

convicted him, he passes from that into the status of the law-breaking and arrested citizen.

"And this legal status depends not upon what a man *is*, but upon the decision of the proper authorities regarding him; not upon what he actually *is* but upon what he is *counted* to be. . . . The legal status of a criminal still undetected is that of a law-abiding citizen. The legal status of a person innocently condemned is that of a law-breaking citizen. It depends not upon what he *actually* is, but upon what he is counted to be.

"And he that decides men's status is the properly authorized magistrate or judge.

This applies to our relation to God. "Our status before God is that either of the just or of the unjust. In the former we are not condemned or, we are *released* from condemnation. He that is still under condemnation occupies the status of the unjust" (Kuyper, *Work of the Holy Spirit*, p. 361).

It appears then that the status of those for whom our Saviour undertook was that of the *unjust*, the *condemned*, under the sentence of death–"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:10). And the result of this legal status is that by nature we are children of wrath (Eph. 2:3).

The legal status of our Lord therefore was that of the unjust. When He assumed our nature He assumed our status and our guilt. His status was not that of holy Adam, but of Adam fallen and condemned. This is what Paul expresses in Galatians 4:4: "He was born of a woman, born under the law." And Isaiah, "He was numbered with the transgressors" (53:12). And therefore "He is despised and rejected of men." He became a curse for us (Gal. 3:13) and was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh. And all that because the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:6). It was the Lord who

did so. In the eternal counsel it was so determined. He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. In the counsel of the Triune God, the Son Himself determined that in His incarnation He should bear the wrath of God against the sins of the world, pouring out His soul unto death. Although *personally* He is God's beloved Son in whom He is well pleased, holy, guiltless, separate from sinners, *officially* as our Mediator He is *counted* a transgressor, made sin for us and bearing our sins in His own body on the tree.

And in this status He found Himself from the hour of His incarnation. It did not *become* His status just before His trial and crucifixion; it was His from the beginning of His life on earth.

A man's *condition in life* is the result of his *legal status*. As long as he is counted before the law a law-abiding citizen he is free; from the moment that he is counted as a law-breaking citizen he is placed under restraint. Adam who stood in original righteousness, was free and enjoyed the beautiful Paradise; his home and its pleasures were his delights. His happiness was equal to his holiness and his freedom to his righteous standing. When through sin he lost his status and entered the status of a law-breaker, his condition immediately changed accordingly and grew worse and worse. He became afraid of God and hid from His approach. He discovered his nakedness and vainly sought to cover his shame with ragged fig leaves. The condemnation of a broken commandment rested upon him and sentence was pronounced upon him and his wife. By the sweat of his brow he was to eat bread all his days. Thorns and thistles were to pursue his tilling of the ground. Exiled from Paradise, exposed to the inclemencies of the weather, his first-born the first manslayer, he went from bad to worse until the Flood destroyed the wicked descendents of the first transgressor. So do status and con-

dition correspond. First a man's legal status, then his condition.

And, on the other hand, no sooner is our status of being unjust changed by justification through faith in Christ, than we are declared and counted to be children of God, holy and beloved, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, yea, temples of the Holy Spirit. What wonderful restoration! And the restoration occurs in the very order in which we were lost. Adam lost his *wisdom* and became foolish; Christ is made unto us *wisdom.* Adam lost his original *righteousness;* Christ is made unto us righteousness. Adam became a sinner and lost his *holiness;* Christ is made unto us sanctification, our imputed holiness all our days! Adam lost his *incorruption* and came under the bondage of corruption both spiritual and physical, bound by sin and sickness and finally death. And to meet all this Christ is made unto us *redemption.* At His coming He shall raise us from the dead and change the body of our humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body. Finally we shall be a redeemed and glorified race in the new earth, under a new heaven. Then shall the conditions of the redeemed gloriously correspond to their exalted legal status.

Hence, from the conditions of a man's life you can judge his legal status. As the one, so must be the other.

And what was the condition of Christ? Did it correspond to His legal status? According to the word of the evangelists, it did in every respect. "Though he was rich, yet . . . he became poor." He was born in poverty; there was no room for Him in the inn. A stable was His birthplace; a manger His cradle; swaddling clothes His infant wardrobe. At His presentation in the temple, His mother sacrificed a pair of turtle doves, the offering of the poor. His life was sought after by Herod. He was exiled with His parents in a foreign country before He was two years old. Judging from

His personal holiness He should have been born conditioned as Adam was in Paradise. He should never have known poverty, misery, bereavement and death. But He was born an heir of the poverty of Joseph and Mary; He was brought up in despised Nazareth; He ate His bread in the sweat of His brow. He was a carpenter by trade. He had not a stone upon which to lay His head. Men hated and persecuted Him. After His transfiguration He saw the storm rapidly gather, until over His devoted head it broke loose with the fury of hell. So, He became our sin-offering. Though He knew no sin, He was made sin for us (II Cor. 5:21). The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:6). He identified Himself with our sins and became as it were the accursed thing (*cherem*) bearing our reproach without the camp. And then as one unworthy of a spot on earth and excluded from heaven, He was crucified, suspended between heaven and earth. And during the last three hours when the sun was darkened, He suffered and endured "inexpressible anguish, pain, terrors and hellish agonies" (Heidelberg Catechism, Question 41) for He was forsaken of God, "Eli! Eli! lama sabachthani." Truly forsaken! He did not only so imagine. It was not because by His agony the eye of faith was obscured, for it was then that His faith gloriously triumphed, wherefore He became the Finisher of the faith, as He is also its Author. Yea, He was forsaken of God. It was the climax of the separation between the holy and righteous God, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look upon iniquity, and our sinful and ruined race; the separation so forcibly typified in the Levitical Ritual. It was the separation of death complete and absolute. He tasted death for all men, as no one before or after Him tasted it, that is, the wages of sin in all its bitterness. And the body was buried, and His disembodied spirit entered Hades where He remained three days.

And so did His condition more and more correspond to His legal status. And judging His legal status from His condition, we clearly see that it was that of the unjust, the transgressor, the guilty and the condemned from the very hour of His birth.

In order to avoid confusion and also to be true to Scripture we must distinguish between His *personal* and *official* life. *Personally* He is ever well-pleasing to the Father. With unspeakable favor and delight the Father ever looked upon Him. *Personally* the Lord Jesus was ever in closest fellowship, in the unbroken communion of love with the Father. He lived a true love life with the Father of which we can have no conception. He never ceased from embracing the Father and He ever found Himself in tenderest, warmest embrace of God. Twice the Father gave expression to this. First, at His baptism when, by the anointing with the Holy Spirit, He was introduced into His threefold office of Prophet, Priest and King, when the Father testified concerning Him: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Second, at His transfiguration, when of His own human choice He determined not to depart this life from the holy mount by transfiguration but to accomplish His "outgoing," (Gr. exodus) at Jerusalem by the death of the cross, the Father again gave the seal of His approval to this great act of our Lord by testifying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. In fact, the Father was never more pleased with Him than when He beheld Him learning obedience by the things which He suffered, drinking the cup which the Father had given Him. He was never more precious to the Father's heart than when in the agony of Calvary, with ruptured heart He cried out with a loud voice, "It is finished." Thus He was the true Antitype of the *burnt offering* in the Levitical Ritual. In His perfectly holy life and sacrificial death He offered Himself a sacrifice of

praise and worship and service and devotion to God, a sweet-smelling savor unto Jehovah (Lev. 1:17).

But *officially* as the *sin offering* He was led away without the gate, apart from the holy city and the holy temple, bearing the cross, what to *us* may be the *symbol* of the curse, which to *Him* was the most awful *reality* to be consumed by the fire of the divine wrath against the sin of the world.

And this was the climax of His humiliation in the body. Then followed His burial and descent into Hades, for that also belongs to the penalty which He suffered for us. The law under which He was born took Him to the cross, to the grave, and to Hades. He had to satisfy its claims to the last farthing. Only after the law was fully satisfied could He go out free, and we with Him.

His burial and descent into Hades are part of the curse. Genesis 3:19 reads: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Through the haughtiness of his personality man sinned and fell, and the grave is the symbol of the complete dissolution of his personality which consists of the union of body and soul. It was not the soul alone that sinned, nor the body alone, but the personality; hence the person must be dissolved by death and both body and soul partake of sin's penalty. Of this dissolution the grave is the symbol. It is man's deepest humiliation. The dust which he touched only with his feet as he walked proudly erect in the earth and surveyed it as his own, is to become his dwelling place and in it he is to disappear, dissolved, destroyed by the worm. According to Paul his dead body has become weak and dishonorable.

Hence to go down into the pit is undoubtedly part of the curse which Christ suffered for us. For it had been predicted, "My flesh also shall rest in hope. For

thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psa. 16:9, 10; Acts 2:31). And again, "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death" (Isa. 53:9). As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the big fish, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matt. 12:40). "As . . . so." As Jonah was in the big fish so was Christ in the grave. How was Jonah in the big fish? Unconscious? By no means! Read the account in Jonah 2:1-7. And so was Christ in the grave. The union of soul and body was temporarily dissolved but not destroyed. The soul was conscious of its body in the grave. The Person of the Saviour was conscious of the horror and humiliation of the grave, as Jonah was in his living tomb.

The grave is undoubtedly part of the penalty of sin, and if the vicarious suffering and death of our Lord had not been followed by His burial and descent into Hades He would not be to us an all-sufficient Saviour. But this part of the penal infliction of the law was also laid on Him; He suffered all the terror of descending into the pit, so vividly described in many Old Testament passages. The conscious soul suffered all the anguish of being separated from the body, the violent and unnatural sundering of what God had joined together; the nameless experience of a disembodied ghostly existence. He was unclothed, He was found naked and not again clothed upon until the third day. And He underwent this ordeal and was not overcome by it; for on the third day God loosed the pains of death, because being holy it was impossible that our Lord should be holden by it (Acts 2:24).

And thus by suffering and enduring all the content of the penalty so that nothing remained to be suffered, He redeemed us from the sting of death and the victory

of the grave. To us that abide in Him the grave has lost its terror and now death is but the transition into the life more abundant. For us He tasted the essential bitterness of death. He passed through the valley of death proper, while His saints go through death's shadows into the rest that remaineth.

Simultaneous with His burial was His descent into Hades. The body, a corpse, was in the grave; the naked spirit in Hades. This is the natural course to which there is no exception. The phrase is borrowed from Psalm 16:10. Having spoken of His flesh which shall rest in hope (v. 9), Messiah says: "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (sheol, hades) neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." This signifies that Christ continued in the state of the dead and under the power of death until the third day. And this is the result of sin. It is the entrance upon eternal death.

Death is fourfold; it is called the *wages* of sin. Sin begins its never-ending process of separation and destruction by its severing the human soul from God, who is her life, her joy, her all; in whom are all her springs. And severed from God she withers and shrivels up and dies; that is, her life without God is death in distinction from what it would be with God. This is *spiritual* death. And spiritual death is followed in due course of time by *physical* death which severs the soul from the body. The Christless soul then enters upon *eternal* death. In the resurrection of judgment (John 5:29) the soul being reunited to the body and cast into the lake of fire, the person of that unrepentant sinner enters upon the *second* death (Rev. 20:14, 15). So the Word of God reveals it and we dare not question its reality. But it has also revealed that Christ, having suffered physical death, entered the eternal death and overcame it and redeemed His saints from its power, and secured for them eternal life. *Spiritual* death Christ

never knew, no more than repentance. Contrition or remorse for sin could never sever His soul from God. Neither did He suffer the second death, for that is irrevocable; no one ever returns from that. But death, physical and eternal was His, only with this understanding, that eternal death He suffered upon the cross when He was actually forsaken by God.

The eternal Son of God assumed our human nature that He might make it the instrument of our redemption. Being in human flesh He could by virtue of His Sonship cast Himself into eternal death without being held thereby, and pass through it, enduring and tasting all there was in it, as in a moment of time, and from it rise again to an endless life. So He suffered eternal death and from it redeemed us who believe in His name. So He loved us and gave Himself for us.

And from this it follows that Christ did not enter Gehenna. Apart from the fact that Gehenna is still in a state of preparation (Jude 6; II Pet. 2:4) Christ suffered the hellish pain already on the cross. The torments of Gehenna affect both body and soul, *reunited in the restored personality*. Hence before the resurrection of the body there can be no suffering in Gehenna. Christ therefore had to endure this most terrible part of the penalty of sin in body and soul *before* He died on the cross. And this He suffered when He cried out, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani"; when He was plunged in "inexpressible anguish, pain, terrors and hellish agonies."

CHAPTER 8

THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE LORD JESUS

If it was not His holiness but He Himself who was made perfect by the things which He suffered, He must needs be subject to many temptations. The subject is very dear to the heart of the saints. He never comes to us more closely, His humanity is never more real than when we see Him tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin; and we realize the great truth of the Word, "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Notice the word: "Able to *succor*." The object of the temptations, therefore, was not that He might be our example.

We may divide the subject into the following parts:

1. The scriptural data
2. His baptism and temptation in the wilderness
3. The subject of the temptation
4. The object or aim
5. The reality
6. The difference between His temptation and ours.

1. *Scriptural Data*

These are as follows: The temptations in the wilderness related by Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12, 13; Luke 4:1-13. Matthew relates another temptation in 16:22, 23. The epistle to the Hebrews has two very precious passages: "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was

in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (4:15). "For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted" (2:18).

These are a few of the Scriptures that mention His temptations. They do not cover the whole field of His experience in this respect. Christ's lifetime on earth was filled with temptation; in this too He was tempted like as we are. To the narrative of His temptation in the wilderness Luke adds significantly that Satan "departed from him *for a season*." He was to come again. The wilderness temptation was but the beginning of a series of temptations that only ended with Calvary. The first Adam was tempted but once, and fell. The last Adam never fell; therefore He was tempted many times even to the end. There were appeals to His physical nature, to His holy ambition, to His Messianic consciousness, to His human fears, to His shrinking from sufferings and the horror of death. In a word: He was tempted like as we are, but we were never tempted like as He was.

Let us take a rapid view of those events of His life in which He was tempted indirectly.

The first of these is recorded in Matthew 16:22, 23. About six months before His passion and death, Jesus began to show unto His disciples how that He must go into Jerusalem and suffer many things and be killed. Then Peter began to rebuke Him, saying: "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." But He turned and said unto Peter: "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." That our Lord was tempted by these apparently innocent and sympathetic words of Peter is apparent from His answer. How could Peter be a Satan unto Him, but by tempting Him?

We read of another temptation recorded as between the lines in the Gospel of John 12:20-22. Certain Greeks came to see Jesus. What did they want? We do not know. Only this we know, that there was something in their conversation with Jesus which led the Master to utter the remarkable words: "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified." Not with the glory perhaps offered by those Greeks, but with that in the way of humiliation, death and burial. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." There is a calm tone of victory in these words which are expressive of the deepened consciousness of the vast significance of the sacrifice which He was so soon to render.

It is needless to say that Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Golgotha were a series of temptations to Him which only added to the supreme sorrow of those hours.

2. *His Baptism and Temptation in the Wilderness*

Let us now consider the history of His baptism and the attending circumstances. First, the baptism proper; second, the descent of the Spirit in the form of a dove; third, the voice from heaven.

First, *the baptism proper.* Of His temptations before His baptism the Gospels are silent. Undoubtedly He was tempted during those thirty years of childhood, youth and early manhood. But that is a chapter of His private life. The Gospels principally record the history of His Messianic appearance; and His temptations are a vital part thereof.

His baptism was not merely symbolic but real. Occupying our legal status under the broken law, it

behooved Him to fulfill all righteousness, and therefore He was baptized. The unbaptized Jew stood outside of the kingdom of heaven. Though he was of Abraham's seed, yet He needed John's baptism for the remission of sin and for entrance into the kingdom. Moreover it was the symbol of the new birth without which there was neither vision nor entrance into the kingdom. To our Lord baptism was not only the symbol but the type of death. The Messianic consciousness had fully dawned upon His soul. Though *personally* He was the well-beloved Son of God, it was *officially* as the Lord's Anointed, as our Saviour, as the Lamb of God bearing the sin of the world and the wrath of God against it, that He descended into the waters of Jordan. And this was typical of the death which He voluntarily suffered in the end. And by this priestly act He entered upon His public ministry.

Second, *the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove.* "And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost" (John 1:33). From this we learn that the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Jesus was the sign by which John the Baptist understood that this Jesus was the Messiah, and that it was the anointing with the Holy Spirit which consecrated Jesus as the Messiah and to His threefold office of Prophet, Priest and King.

And here again we distinguish in Christ the personal and official aspect. He was not anointed with the Holy Spirit as the Logos; He, from whom the Holy Spirit proceedeth, even as He proceedeth from the Father, cannot have the Holy Spirit imparted unto Him. Neither did He receive this anointing as man. He was conceived by the Spirit, and in this the Spirit was given Him without measure. John 3:34 closely connects this receiving of

the Holy Spirit on the part of Christ with His being sent into the world. It is difficult, nay impossible, to conceive of our Lord at any time of His divine-human appearance as being without the Holy Spirit's presence and guidance. If in the holy conception Jesus did not receive the Holy Ghost in *unlimited* measure, then the measure must have been *limited*. And why was it unlimited? Because there was nothing in Him which antagonized the Spirit's unlimited sway as there is in us. Moreover, as the second Adam He must needs have the Spirit in unmeasured degree–not merely as *dwelling* in Christ, but as one Spirit with the human spirit of Christ, in the most intimate personal union, never to depart from Him, not even in death; but to continue with Him until the hour when He shall deliver the kingdom unto God the Father, that God may be all in all. Hence John's remark, "And he abode upon him" (1:32).

Our Lord was anointed with the Holy Spirit as the *God-man*. It was His consecration to His holy office as Prophet, Priest and King. This was not installation but consecration. He did not enter upon His Messianic office at His baptism. He was such from the moment of His holy birth. He was the Messiah *born*, "Unto you is born this day . . . a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Nay, He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; He was anointed from eternity. In Psalm 2:6 we read: "Yet have I set (Heb., anointed, *nasak*) my king upon my holy hill of Zion." And in Proverbs 8:23, "I was set up (*nasak*, anointed) from everlasting." In Isaiah 61:1 Messiah says: The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me: because the Lord hath *anointed* me to preach good tidings unto the meek. In this instance the Hebrew verb is *mashak*. Both verbs are used to denote the official act of anointing kings and prophets and priests to their respective offices. It was the official consecration described in Exodus

30:30. The Lord Jesus appears here as the Antitype. True, at His baptism the consecrating oil was lacking, and that was most natural. The holy oil was the symbol of the Holy Spirit,' and the symbol vanishes when the thing or person symbolized appears.

Dr. Kuyper describes this holy oil and its symbolism as follows: "Oil is liquid glowing gold which hides fire in its drops. As this golden glow is the image and symbol of the glory and majesty, so this mysterious fire is image and symbol of majesty which shields or destroys. In both the energy proceeds from God as Creator" (*Dodraceno*, I, 280).

Third, the voice from heaven, saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This divine revelation contains a twofold meaning.

First, the voice from heaven signifies the divine approval of His past private life in Nazareth which was now ended. His earthly appearance may be divided into three well-defined parts: 1) His personal life in *private*, closing with His baptism; 2) His personal life in *public*, which apparently came to a close on the Mount of Transfiguration; 3) His *official* life ending at His death.

We know very little of His personal life in private. But it was the life of the Son of God in human flesh, a life of growth and development, of profound meditation, of intimate fellowship with the Father, of most diligent study of the sacred oracles; a life of service and humiliation. In His private life Christ is always the Antitype of the burnt offering which was offered up in the camp on the great altar and which was an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord (Lev. 1:17). Hence, whether He lived in the obscurity of the carpenter's shop in Nazareth or in the white light of highest popularity in Capernaum or Jerusalem He was always an object of divine approval, a sweet fragrance unto Jehovah, as Isaiah said: "His fragrance shall be in the fear of the Lord" (11:3, Heb.).

On the Mount of Transfiguration when His earthly life might have ended, but did not end, we hear again the same voice from the excellent glory, uttering the same words of divine approval. And what was the resurrection which crowned His official life but the loudest approval of the Father, as He raised Him from the dead and then declared Him to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness.

Second, this divine revelation mightily confirmed our Lord in the deep consciousness that He was the Son of the Father and the Lord's Anointed, promised to the fathers. When as a Babe He lay in His mother's arm, there was no consciousness of self. Gradually as He entered upon self-conscious existence, the fact of His being more than what He seemed to be, even the Son of God dawned upon Him. There were inward revelations of the Holy Spirit growing in clearness, more and more establishing Him in the consciousness of His divine Sonship and therefore of being the long-expected Antitype of every typical part of the glories of the temple service. No, it was no self-aggrandizement, it was no proud assumption of things too high for Him, but much rather the accepting of a trust, a charge, a responsibility so vast, so immeasurably comprehensive, coming with such exacting claims and demands that if He had not been conscious of being the Son of God, He could not have accepted the awful burden of becoming the Saviour of the world. "His coming forth as Messiah was not usurpation, but obedience; not free choice, but inevitable divine necessity" (Bruce, *Apologetics*, p. 365).

And of the consciousness of this twofold fact, (that He was the Son of God, and the Messiah) this divine revelation direct from the Father, was a mighty confirmation. Henceforth that consciousness could not be shaken. It was the consciousness of the God-man. The consciousness of the Son of God could now more freely impart

itself to the consciousness of the Son of man. Hitherto the two consciousnesses may have been, probably were, less intimately united. While the divine consciousness was perfect and therefore not subject to change, the human consciousness was in a state of development; it was imperfect; clear as a cloudless Eastern sky at one time, overcast at another. Such is the human consciousness at all times. We see no reason why in this respect the Lord Jesus should have been different, for He was sent forth in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3). That there were times when conflicts were disturbing the tranquility of His soul, we learn from the records. Temptation means conflict, else it is no temptation. And such conflicts may have a darkening effect upon the consciousness. But, howsoever that may have been, it is sure that after this divine revelation His human consciousness became so settled, steadfast, and immovable that it was readily received into perfect union with the divine, and therefore became invincible. And it was this divine-human consciousness, shining with clear, steady radiance, which was His greatest support in the conflict with Satan and obtained Him victory.

"And finally, to the question why the Person of the Mediator needed this remarkable event and these three signs that accompany it, we answer:

"First, Christ must be a true man even in His office, wherefore He must be consecrated according to the human custom. He enters upon His public ministry at thirty; He is publicly installed, and He is anointed, consecrated with the Holy Spirit.

"Second, for His human consciousness this striking revelation from heaven was of the utmost necessity. The conflict of the temptation was to be absolute, i.e., *indescribable*: hence the impression of His consecration must be *indestructible*.

"Third, for the apostles and the Church it was necessary to distinguish unmistakably the true Messiah from all the pseudo-messiahs and antichrists. This is the reason of St. John's strong appeal to this event" (Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, p. 99).

The Temptation in the Wilderness

Mark's narrative of this important event in the life of Christ has a few particulars which makes it differ from the other two records. The *first* is the peculiar expression: "The Spirit *driveth* him into the wilderness."

The verb *to drive* has in the original the additional notion of greater or less violence and in the construction of this passage that of irresistible force (Thayer). Dr. Kuyper remarks here: "This action of the Holy Spirit was not identical with the impulse of Christ's human nature. Of Himself Jesus would not have gone into the desert: His going there was the result of the Holy Spirit's leading. Only in this way this passage receives its full explanation."

"The Spirit driveth him into the wilderness (to be) tempted of Satan." This passage has often been difficult to understand. Some have said: "Since God tempts not any man (James 1:13) how is it that Christ teaches us to pray, 'Lead us not into temptation.' Does God really lead His children into temptation?" Let Scripture answer for itself. Mark expressly states that the Holy Spirit drove Him into the wilderness and adds, to be tempted of Satan. Who was it that led Joseph, Jacob's son, into the family of Potiphar where the great temptation of his life awaited him? In His Providence the Lord our God *does lead* us into places and circumstances where temptations will surely try and afflict us, because we need the revelations which God through them will bring to us–revelations of inherent weaknesses, possibilities

of sin and disaster hitherto unsuspected yet lurking within. One night a merchant in great financial embarrassment found himself in his office tracing another man's signature and found that he could easily forge a check. When suddenly in the midst of the temptation, he saw the precipice yawning at his feet and he exclaimed: "Before God I am a forger already." He humbled himself, confessed His sin and faced the situation, trusting his Lord to keep him an honest man.

Yes, God does lead into temptations but always for the highest purpose, even our sanctification and growth in godliness. And as He *leads* us *into* temptation so He *abides* with us *in* the temptation and safely *conducts* us *through* and *out* of the temptation into a place of victory and liberty. And in the midst of it all we have our blessed Advocate with the Father praying for us that our faith will fail not.

That Jesus of Himself would not have gone into the desert is very natural. Can we have any conception of Christ's inward feelings at that hour? His public consecration was to Him the climax of glory in all His experience. Naturally, highest and greatest joy and exaltation, most ardent enthusiasm filled His holy soul. This was the hour so eagerly longed for, when He could go forth and begin His career as Israel's Messiah and Deliverer. Not the wilderness but the cities of the land, teeming with humanity was the vision before Him. Conscious of His Messiah dignity as never before, with the divine approval and its mighty revelation still ringing in His ears, there could be but one aim, but one purpose, forthwith to set out and proclaim Himself as the Lord's Anointed, to preach good tidings unto the meek, to proclaim liberty to the captive and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Not the wilderness but Capernaum and Tiberias and Jerusalem! Not to be tempted but to appear as Israel's Promised Prophet, Priest and King!

And, then? Oh, let us read it slowly and reverently and consider, if we can, what the reality must have been to our Lord in these moments of highest exaltation. "And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness"; and Matthew adds, "to be tempted of the devil." And our Lord then entered into the experience which would be that of His disciples throughout the ages: that the bestowal of greatest blessings, the taste of sweetest fellowship is almost invariably followed by deepest waters of affliction and fiercest fires of persecution. And that is the time for them to prove that they are worthy.

It is delightful to see how our Lord did not oppose, but yielded to this forceful act of the Holy Spirit. He never opposed the Holy Spirit, therefore He never failed. The cause of our failures is found right here; we oppose and thus grieve the Holy Spirit. And yet without Him we can do nothing.

The second particular which marks the narrative of Mark's Gospel is found in the thirteenth verse, "He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan: and was with the wild beasts." The remarkable combination of these three particulars clearly indicate that our Lord stood and acted there as the second Adam, Head and Representative of the redeemed race. These words recall the narrative of the temptation in Eden with this striking difference, that while the first Adam was tempted in Paradise, surrounded by a friendly and peaceable animal world and fell, the second Adam was tempted in a world such as sin had made it, a wilderness, and wild beasts, and He triumphed. The first Adam, under the most favorable circumstances was tempted and fell; the second Adam, under the most adverse and trying circumstances, was tempted and came out Victor. Does not this set forth in clearest light the vast superiority of the Latter? The second Adam was all that the first

Adam was, and moreover He was the Son of God. In Paradise the man was tempted and fell; in the wilderness the God-man was tempted and overcame. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19). And this is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

3. *The Subject of the Temptation*

"To be tempted of the devil." The question is not superfluous. Who or what was tempted? Was it the divine nature? Was it the human? It was neither one. A mere nature cannot be tempted for it is impersonal. The subject must necessarily be a *person;* for in temptation the personal factors, *judgment, will* and *choice* are called upon to act. Could the Son of God be tempted? No; James explicitly declares that God cannot be tempted with evil, neither doth He tempt any man (1:13). Nor was it the man Jesus alone, apart from the Son of God. And it is foolish to ask, what in that case would have happened? It did not happen; the human nature or rather the man Jesus never appeared, thought, spoke or acted without the Son of God, with whom He lived in closest and most intimate organic union. No; it was neither the Son of God, nor the man Jesus that was tempted, but it was the *God-man.* In spite of the difficulties implied we hold fast to the confession that in all His life neither the one nature nor the other ever acted, spoke or thought independently of the other, but always as the God-man. If the solicitations to evil were directed to the human nature, it was the divine nature which so supported, animated and comforted Him that however real the temptation was it could not overcome Him. Of this we have an illustration in our own human experience. In temptations to the carnal appetites the saint is supported,

animated and directed by his spiritual nature, including the mental and moral. And so it is the saint who is tempted and who overcomes.

The Holy Spirit so filled Him, so inspired His speech, so illuminated His mental and spiritual vision, kept His heart so filled and overflowing with the conscious love of God, that no temptation however overwhelming ever overwhelmed Him or caused Him to err or be deceived. All that divine wisdom could devise to make Him a real Saviour, bringing absolute redemption to this sin-wrecked world, had been furnished. Hence God's Champion for holiness against sin was perfectly equipped for the great undertaking of destroying the works of the devil. And the main factor in this terrible conflict which brought Him victory, was the now undimmed, deeply settled consciousness of being the Messiah, the God-man.

And yet the God-man was tempted in the human nature without calling upon the infinite resources of the Son of God. He was tempted in a human way, by human means, with appeals to human needs and conditions: He "was in all points tempted like as we are." How comprehensive this passage! He was just as helpless as we are, just as dependent upon God. Himself He could not save, no more than you or I can save ourselves. He could satisfy other men's hunger; His own hunger He could not satisfy. He could use the divine power at His disposal in the service of others, but for Himself He could not. "As to the question whether the Godhead of Christ did not support His humanity, we answer: Undoubtedly; but never independently of the Holy Spirit. We faint because we resist, grieve and repel the Holy Spirit. Christ was always victorious because His divinity never relaxed His hold upon the Holy Spirit in the human nature, but embraced Him and clave unto Him with all the love and energy of the Son of God" (Kuyper, *Work of the Holy Spirit*, p. 103).

We believe therefore according to the Word of revelation, that it was our Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man, who was tempted.

4. *The Object of the Temptation*

This will answer, we trust, the question so often asked and so puzzling to many, "If He was perfectly sinless and even could not sin, 1) how could He be tempted? And if tempted 2) how could the temptation be real to Him? And 3) why was He tempted; what was the object?" The sacred Scriptures give sufficient light on these points, although there always remains room for the exercise of faith.

Though perfectly sinless our Lord could be tempted even as Adam was and as the holy angels were. God alone cannot be tempted with evil. His is the perfect, absolute freedom from every possibility of acting contrary to His own infinitely holy and righteous Being. God cannot deny Himself. The Scripture teaches the impeccability of our Lord on this very ground; the ego of the God-man was the ego of the Son of God.

But as we have seen before, it was not the Son of God who was tempted, but the God-man in the human nature.

To be tempted is no sin; neither does temptation imply that the human function or faculty appealed to by the temptation must some way or other be inclined to sin. To say that there was in our Lord's human nature something to which the temptation appealed and which naturally responded, does not in the least conflict with our Lord's absolute sinlessness. "Every physical faculty and limit," says Bishop Moule, "which in us, men, is an avenue for temptation and ministers to a sinning spirit, was in Him. Yet He was perfectly holy." In order to make this point clear, let us put it as follows:

God created man a deep and everlasting void. "The soul in its highest sense is a vast capacity for God," (Drummond) but emptiness without God. Man is a creature being; hence he is not self-existent as is God, but needs constant outside support. His physical, mental and spiritual needs are without number. This was the divine intention so that from His own infinite fullness God might fill every finite need. And for every part of man's want God also created the corresponding supply. There is bread for the physical nature and bread for the spiritual nature, and, God gives bread and not a stone, for the mental nature. Necessarily the supply *appeals* to the need. The sight of, the very thought of, bread makes the starving beggar feel his hunger all the more. The bread appeals to his hunger and his empty stomach does respond. The little child is love-hungry and the sight of his mother appeals to his hunger and he cries for her. And this is true of our hearts with relation to God. Our hearts hunger for Him and therefore cry out for Him. The very thought of God stirs up in the heart the longing and yearning after Him. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God; My soul thirsteth for God, the living God." And this delights our God; it pleases Him to satisfy our hunger with the very fatness of His house and to make us drink of the rivers of His pleasures (Psa. 36:8). But, it would not please but deeply grieve Him (humanly speaking) if we accepted meat and drink which He had denied us, from the hand of another, be he saintliest man or holiest angel.

And this was the saddest part of the whole tragedy of Paradise. Man's heart hungered after God; and Satan's promise that the eating of the forbidden fruit would cause him to know even as God knows, appealed to him. It created in him the *desire* for what God had forbidden. This wrong desire was the sin which was completed by

the actual eating of the fruit. Hence sin originates when the desire is aroused for what God has denied; and is completed when the offered supply is accepted from the hand of another and not of God.

And the second Adam was placed in the same position as the first. According to His human nature He was just as much in need of food as the first Adam. There were in Him needs and necessities which demanded physical, mental and spiritual supplies. Every such necessity created a corresponding hunger. And when the devil offered Him bread after His forty day's fast, the offer appealed to His hunger, and His hunger cried for bread. He was actually starving. His physical nature asserted its rights and peremptorily demanded bread. It loudly cried out for bread. And thus He was tempted to use His divine powers to turn stones into bread and appease His hunger. But the point we make is, that the fact that Satan's suggestion of bread appealed to His hunger and that His hunger responded, *was no sin.* No more was it a sin in the second temptation when at Satan's suggestion, of a speedy realization of His Messianic aspirations, these aspirations were appealed to and they responded; nor when in the third temptation, the Satanic proposition to give Him the kingdoms of this world and their glory excited His holy ambition, for it was the Father's promise that to Him should be given the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. The fact that the tempation appealed to something within Him and received a response, does not in the least affect His absolute sinlessness. As Dr. Kuyper says: "Although there was in that fallen nature something to incite Him to desire, yet it never became desire" (*Work of the Holy Spirit,* p. 91). Let us emphasize this important point. In Christ the appeal to His needy human nature, however strong, never aroused desire. His only desire,

the one all-absorbing desire of His holy soul was to please God first and above all. "While our ego incited by our sinful nature actually desires against God, *His* holy ego opposed the incitement of His adopted nature and was never overcome" (Kuyper). Christ had no desire apart from God. Desire indicates a lack. And since Christ had the Father and nothing without the Father, He had no lack. Whatever the Father withheld from Him created no lack in Him. If there was a conscious lack in His life, as when He said, "Father, glorify thou me . . . with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," it was immediately silenced by the consciousness that His present lack was the Father's will. Hence He had no desire apart from the Father's will; but it was His meat and drink to do all the Father's will.[7]

From this we understand the importance of the tenth commandment: "Thou shalt not covet," i.e., desire. By the desire for what God has withheld, sin is generated and committed. Says James, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." This is the desire, the craving of one's weak *nature* and does not yet constitute personal sin. "Then, when lust hath conceived, (i.e., created the personal desire) it bringeth forth . . . death" (Jas. 1:14, 15). This is the generation of sin so hateful to the child of God.

If in Christ's temptation there was no appeal to something within, then it was no temptation. Yet Scripture assures us that He was tempted; therefore, there must have been an appeal. However, that was not sinful. His hunger was appealed to and responded, but not His ego. Whatever was the strain upon His physical nature and powers of endurance His spirit never flinched, never relaxed its hold upon the Holy Spirit, and that meant victory to Him as well as it does now to us. And so

we see that though He was perfectly holy, yet He was tempted with sore and real temptations to evil.

5. *The Reality*

And this brings us to the *second* point: How could the temptation be real to Him as it is to us? We think that according to Scripture the temptation was to Christ not only as real as it is to us, but a great deal more real and that just because He was absolutely spotless, pure and undefiled. "In some sense," says Bishop Moule, "the solicitations of evil appear as a trial as real for Him as for His followers."

In the first place, the temptations which He suffered were real to Him because by them the evil one offered Him the satisfaction of real human needs and necessities. Only think of the command to turn stones into bread. Christ had fasted forty days. Then His physical need asserted itself and cried for bread. Both Matthew and Luke expressly state the fact that He hungered. Judging only from the long duration of His fasting He was not hungry but famished. He was physically exhausted, almost fainting. If the physical nature of Adam still wholly intact in its original strength, required food for its subsistence, how much more the physical nature in Christ which was made in the likeness of sinful flesh and therefore frail, weakened and its powers of endurance much reduced. Strictly honest men have been known to steal when they were starving. In fact, we do not know any physical suffering more distressful and therefore more intensely real than hunger, unless it be thirst, and probably our blessed Lord suffered both. Hence this temptation must have been to Christ very real indeed.

And again. In all his attempts to seduce Jesus, Satan repeatedly suggested to Him ways and means

whereby He might attain glory and power *without the cross*. Can we imagine an ordeal more terrifying to the human flesh than that of crucifixion? Does not human flesh instinctively shrink from pain and suffering? Is it not susceptible of feelings of terror, fear, and horror which in some instances have caused immediate death? Let us consider that human nature was not created for sorrow, pain and suffering; that such are utterly foreign to it; that however much human nature may have endured, it never can get used to them. Pain will always be pain and human nature will always shrink from it. Stoicism *seemed* indifferent to pain, but it was either affectation or dehumanization. God made man for Himself in whose presence is fullness of joy, at whose right hand there are pleasures forevermore. Man need not get used to joy; it is his natural element, and God endowed him with vast capacities for joy. It is only by our sinful condition that our capacities for pain and sorrow seem just as boundless.

"And our Lord being a real and complete man felt man's instinctive and necessary aversion from suffering as such (Matt. 26:39)" (Bishop Moule). When therefore the suggestion came to His sensitive soul of a possibility of escape from the awful horror and shame of the cross, it was to Him a real temptation. It appealed to His human soul as strongly as it would to ours. And yet, however real to His human nature, Himself, His ego never for a moment even considered the matter; He repudiated it, He ignored it, and went on His way inwardly and unchangeably determined to finish the work which the Father had given Him. But the temptation as such was very real.

In the second place, the temptation was real to Him because it brought Him into direct contact not only with moral evil but with the evil *one*. He was always surrounded with evil, for He lived in an evil world; and

the very sight of evil must have inflicted keen pain upon His sensitive soul. But in His temptation evil *personally* attacked Him; by its foul breath it sought to defile Him and by its poisonous atmosphere to destroy Him. And how He hated sin! Though utterly dead to sin as such, He was intensively alive to its presence, its antagonizing and deadly hatred of God and of all God's holy kingdom. Hence there was in Him a personal horror and recoil from moral evil so keen that it caused Him an anguish of soul to us unconceivable. We cannot appreciate this. By sin our human nature has become spiritually dull and insensible so that it is possible for us to be unaware of sin's near presence. The prophet exclaims, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity." Kuyper calls this "the divine sensitiveness." By its union with the divine nature, Christ's humanity must have shared this communicable attribute; hence His utter loathing of sin. In some slight degree we can appreciate this source of suffering to Christ when we think of the nameless horror to a pure soul when insulted modesty overspreads the countenance with the crimson blush of shame. And if this is so painfully real to a pure, yet sinful soul, how much more real it must have been to Him who knew no sin.

In the third place, the temptation was to Christ very real because in His temptations He did not act for Himself. In all these testings and trials we appreciate a priestly act and devotion both to God and the race. To His Messianic consciousness it was perfectly clear that, in His temptation especially, He acted not only personally but officially as the second Adam in behalf of them for whom He undertook. In Hebrews 7:22, Jesus is spoken of as a surety of a better testament. *He assumed the vast responsibilities of Surety of the Covenant of Grace.* The slightest deviation from, the

very suggestion of a desire opposing the Father's will, would at once disqualify Him for His work, and there would have been no redemption. The world's redemption depended upon the perfection and absolute holiness of His Person and work. And this responsibility must have added immeasurably to the reality of His temptation. Responsibility is sometimes a well-nigh crushing burden. Husbands and fathers are to a great extent responsible for the temporal and eternal welfare of their families; and what a task it is! The sad and care-worn countenance of Abraham Lincoln indicates the effect of the burden of responsibility of one almost a dictator in a wide, war-torn country, which came near to crushing, at times, the mere human soul and body. Yet, what are these compared to the burden of Him who voluntarily assumed the responsibility of saving the world, of redeeming the human race lost in sin, of meeting and vanquishing the enemy who had brought sin, death and dissolution upon this fair earth; and so to restore the ruined world order, that in the end, when the new heavens shall overarch the new earth, the former things shall be remembered no more.

Responsibility means ability to respond. Did Christ possess such ability? And the answer is the confession of His eternal Deity. The Word became flesh, the God-man. It seems to us that in view of these things it is impossible to question the reality of His temptations.

This brings us to the third question: "Why was He tempted; what was the object of the temptations?"

Here we distinguish between *test* and *temptation*. "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man," says James; but we know that God does *test* His children. Every commandment, every charge, appointment or trust coming from Him is a test of obedience, efficiency, faithfulness and endurance. Blessings invariably impose responsibility; the greater the blessing the greater the responsibility; and responsibility

means temptation not to respond. So were Noah, Abraham, Moses and all the saints introduced to us in the Bible, tried and tested again and again. Each life was a test ending only with death.

And what was the object of these testings? Manifold indeed! The tests were intended for the *exercise* of the powers and faculties wherewith God had endowed His servants, especially the exercise of their priestly functions of practical sympathy and intercession. The failures of these powers revealed to these men their vital weakness and frailties, which if not removed, would inevitably in the end work ruin. And again, the tests were intended to separate the dross from the gold in their hearts and lives, and finally, by the exercise of their powers and faculties, to prepare them for the higher service in the coming kingdom. Such is the divine purpose in all the trials which meet us day by day.

Satan sought to frustrate this divine purpose by turning every *test* from the Father's hand into a *temptation,* soliciting us to evil. God's testing of Adam Satan turned into a temptation. God tests and Satan tempts. God's testings purpose our eternal good; Satan's temptations, our eternal evil.

With regard to the temptation of our Lord, were they tests or temptations? They were both. God tested Him and Satan tempted Him; and both together effected the final divine purpose, namely to prove that He is truly a Saviour able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him.

By Satan's temptations God tested Him. Did God then test Him in order to discover how much of burden-bearing He could endure without breaking down? By no means. God knows Himself; He knows the infinite resources of the eternal God Triune. Was then the God-man to discover the weakest points in His own human nature? If He knew what was in man He certainly must

have known Himself. There were no tests needed to reveal to Him anything pertaining to His divine and His human nature for He knows both with perfect knowledge.

Why, then, was He tested and tempted? Not personally but officially as the Mediator was He tested and tempted. If it behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, then He must endure temptation, for *they* are tempted. If He is to become the Author and Finisher of faith both *for* us and *in* us, then His faith must be tested in the crucible seven times heated and must prove itself invincible. If He is to be the Bridge across the chasm created by sin between God and man, then He is to be so tested and tempted that not a shadow of doubt can remain as to His being worthy of all trust and confidence.

The epistle to the Hebrews contains a few passages which shed a flood of light on this matter. In chapter 2:10 says the author: "The captain of their salvation (was to be made) perfect through suffering"; and in 5:8, "Though he were (a) Son, yet learned he obedience"; and again in 2:18, "For that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted."

From these passages we learn that our Lord was to be perfected, had to learn obedience by suffering and temptation. "Perfected" is not used in the sense of "sinless" for that He was from the hour of His conception, but in the sense in which no one can be perfect who has not submitted to the discipline of trial. And again, "perfected" is not used personally but officially as Mediator between God and man. He was to be Mediator whose character and work were to be without the least flaw or defect, in order that the Father might approve Him and seal His work as perfect, the firm foundation of His people's acceptance with God. He was also perfected that His people might have perfect trust and

confidence in Him and full salvation, and there find all that is needed for their comfort. And so we consider, *first*, that He was to be perfected with reference to God; and *second*, with reference to His people.

First, with reference to God, He was to be perfected through suffering; and His sufferings were His temptations, and His temptations His sufferings. The two are inseparable. The Author and Finisher of faith, though He were (a) Son, yet learned obedience. Faith and obedience are the two powerful factors in the process of His being made perfect. These two require special attention.

FAITH. In order to be the Author of faith, i.e., the Chief leader, the efficient Cause and Finisher of faith, He who perfected faith, who exercised faith triumphantly to the end–Himself must exercise faith, even as He was supported by hope and had love shed abroad in His heart by the Holy Spirit without measure. Of course, this refers to His human nature; as the Son of God faith and hope are out of the question.

However, in speaking of the faith of our Lord, we must not think of the faith whereby we sinners are made partakers of the redemption which is in Christ, for our Lord was holy, and needed no Saviour any more than Adam did before the fall. Our faith is a faculty imparted to us by the Holy Spirit in the new birth which is from above. The faith of holy Adam and of the holy angels is part of the natural and original righteousness, and therefore is called the *natural* or the *original* faith. This original faith Kuyper defines as the "*conscious, harmonious relation between the Divine Original and man who is the image-bearer.*" Of that faith the author of the Hebrews says: "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (11:6). Of that faith Christ is the Author and Finisher. Adam too began to exercise that faith but

never finished it; but the last Adam did. He completed it from beginning to end. That faith burned in His soul with steady flame and was never affected by the furious storms of hostility, temptation and satanic hatred from without. Whatever were the sorrow and anguish in Gethsemane, He ever remained deeply conscious of His relation to God and that was ever normal and harmonious. This appears from His cry, in the garden: "My Father, if it be possible," etc. Yea, even in the forsakenness on the cross that conscious, harmonious relation was not disturbed; how else could He cry out, "My God, *my* God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Forsaken—yes, as sinbearer forsaken, so that we should never be forsaken—but still My God. This mysterious cry should not be interpreted as the expression of a faith weakened and obscured by His sufferings as though doubt and unbelief had any effect upon it. His faith ever upholding Him was never obscured, weak or trembling. Unbelief and doubt were utterly foreign to it. How else could He be *in us* the Author and Finisher of faith?

And from this very unshaken consciousness of His own personal relation to God there sprang forth that powerful trust in all the divine promises regarding Himself which marked His whole appearance. When all the waves and billows of the divine displeasure rolled over His head, faith still held fast, not for a single moment relaxing its firm hold upon His God; not merely *clinging* as in fear of being swept away, but firmly planted, immovably secure on the Rock that was higher than He. His faith was not only a *trusting* faith full of quietness and confidence, but a triumphant faith, an overcoming faith which filled His soul with highest expectation, as only such faith can do. Read carefully Psalm 22:22-31. Wherefore the epistle to the Hebrews declares that "for the joy that was *set before him* (He) endured the cross, despising the shame."

And so He perfected the faith which is to us the very consciousness of our salvation from beginning to end, and of our harmonious relation to God; the wonderful instrument whereby I know Him in whom I believe, whereby I am and remain deeply conscious that I belong to Him and He to me; and that I not only cannot slip through His fingers as He holds me in His hand, but that I am one of His fingers, a limb of His glorious body, indissolubly united to Him, He my glorious Head, by His Spirit, with whom I am baptized. And so I live by the faith of the Son of God, the faith which He perfected, the strong and indestructible instrument of my salvation. To forge that instrument in the furnace of His sufferings, behold that was the object of His temptations. That mighty faith was tested by all the powers of heaven and hell: the Father's forsaking, hell's concentrated effort in that hour of utter darkness to slay and vanquish Him; and yet that faith never failed, not even trembled, but stood as a rock in the heart of the raging sea, unmoved and immovable. Hence it will never fail us; it cannot fail. The faith that was tested by the ordeal of Calvary and gloriously sustained the trial, will sustain all other trials that may crowd into our lives during this testing time.

OBEDIENCE. And supported by this faith He learned obedience, though He was a Son; not as the Son of God but of man. "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" His obedience, springing from faith, at the same time tested the power of faith and proved that it was invincible.

He learned obedience. Did He then not know how to obey? Surely, our Lord had no inclinations to disobey as we have. When then is the meaning of this learned obedience? Though a holy man, for His moral development, for His attaining perfection as our Mediator, He had to *exercise* obedience. It is only by exercise that

one learns. In plant life the seed contains the germ, the ideal of what in maturity shall be actual. The plant to attain this must obey the law of its own nature and the dormant germ must become active, take root and shoot upward and produce bud, blossom and fruit. And so there lay in the soul of the Christ-child the germ of a perfect obedience. By means of the trials and temptations of His earthly life this inherent ideal must become visibly real and actual. Obedience develops only through obedience. He learned obedience by obeying.

And that meant self-denial. The self-denial which our Lord enjoins upon every one that will come after Him, He practised Himself He had an unholy self to deny as we have; He denied His holy self. When His pure and holy inclinations conflicted with His mission He opposed them and obeyed the Father. His fear of death, His shrinking from pain and suffering belonged to His holy human nature; and these caused Him to cry out in the Garden: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Yet He denied them and immediately He said: "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." So He learned obedience through self-denial.

And again, He learned obedience by ever *choosing* to do the Father's will–His obedience was much more from *holy choice* than from *natural impulse*. To Him it was a constant delight to obey the commandments. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind and strength. His holy impulses gladly combined in obeying a commandment so sweet and gracious. But the commandment to lay down His life was not obeyed from *impulse* but from holy *choice*. He was quite well able to understand why He should obey the commandment of love; such obedience was to Him the very joy of life. But did He fathom all the depth of that other commandment of laying down His life? We believe that there were times when He did not. The man

Jesus *learned to realize* what the cup of His passion contained only as He drank and tasted it and emptied it. Step by step new depths, new meanings He discovered. For instance, when He entered Gethsemane we read that "He *began* to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy" (Mark 14:33). There is a peculiar force in the choice of these words, "*He began,*" showing that the agony fell upon Him unexpectedly. In the preceding discourses and especially in His High Priestly prayer there is not a trace of the agony which He suffered in the garden; all was serene and full of heavenly peace and calm until He entered Gethsemane when He began to be sore amazed, and very heavy. The word rendered "amazed" *(ekthamboumay)* expresses the very perfections of wonder and marvel, "to be struck with terror," to be "amazed," i.e., like a bird caught in the meshes of a net, bewildered, confused, unable to escape. Did our Lord realize a new element in the cup which the Father had given Him to drink? We do not doubt it. He expresses the same wonder in that awful cry: "My God, my God, *why* hast thou forsaken me?" Why? It was the cry of His soul sorely amazed at the fact of being forsaken. It certainly was not used for rhetorical effect. It was the cry of His soul sorely amazed at the fact of being forsaken. He, the Father's obedient Son, ever conscious of the Father's good pleasure, always finding His delight in pleasing the Father. And now, forsaken? No wonder that He cried out: Why? He did not fathom the depth of the abyss into which He was to descend to find our pardon and acceptance with God until He reached the lowest pit. "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord" (Psa. 130:1). And yet—and this is our point—though *not understanding the reason,* still He obeyed; He blindly obeyed unto death, even the death of the cross. The Captain of our salvation left the Metropolis of the Kingdom under *sealed* orders, and obeyed. And so He learned obedience;

an obedience perfected, the solid foundation of His people's redemption; Himself their perfected Mediator.

And that faith and obedience proved Him to be a Saviour able to please God and to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him (Heb. 7:25). And therefore He was "approved of God . . . by miracles and wonders and signs" (Acts 2:22) and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4).

Second, He was to be perfected so that His people at all times under all circumstances might have perfect trust and confidence in Him. "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:18). In order to be succored in testing times His people must put their fullest trust in Him. And in order to trust Him, i.e., to risk all that they have and are and forever hope to be upon their faith in Him, they must have the strongest evidence that He is able, fully, abundantly able to save and to succor, whatever the stress and strain and martyrdom of life may be. And to give them this assurance therefore was He tempted.

When one night many years ago, during a terrific storm, the first passenger train from Edinburgh to Dundee ran over the new railroad bridge across the Firth of Fay, the strain was too great for the new structure and it collapsed. The train was swept into the seething waters below and hundreds of lives perished. Later reports showed that the bridge had not been sufficiently tested. In the tests too much had been taken for granted. Our blessed Lord is to us the Bridge across the bottomless chasm caused by sin, between heaven and earth. Do you see why He had to be tested? Not to prove any weakness, but His everlasting strength. Test upon test He endured. Heavier and more colossal were the burdens laid upon Him. The prophet testifies, "The Lord hath

laid on him the iniquity of us all," (Isa. 53:6), i.e., the unit of the world's moral evil. And yea, He was made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13).

And burdened with these, the great Sin-Bearer complains in deepest distress: "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me" (Psa. 42:7). "Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, . . . with all thy waves. While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off. They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together. Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness" (Psa. 88:7, 15-18).

Such were the tests and He failed not. He endured it all. He proved to be greater and stronger than all the burdens of test and trial of sorrow and anguish, of crucifixion and the Father's forsakenness, of death and Hades. For the joy of consecrating for us that new and living way, through the veil, that is to say His flesh (Heb. 10:20) He endured the cross and despised the shame. And on the third day He rose again from the dead, stronger than death, and ascended through the heavens and sat down, the work of our Great High Priest being finished, at the right hand of the Father as our Redeemer, Mediator and Intercessor. And though for two thousand years millions of His believing people have put all their trust in Him, He has never failed one of them. And He never will. Stronger, more glorious than ever, He goes forth today conquering and to conquer until all His foes shall be under His feet and the last enemy, even death, shall be destroyed.

And thus He hath proven that He is able to succor them that are tempted, because He Himself hath suffered being tempted.

6. *The Difference Between His Temptations and Ours*

We notice the following differences between the temptations of our Lord and our own. We believe this to be useful, for thus we may learn the vast difference between Him and ourselves, He the Ideal which by the patient operation of His Spirit He is gradually realizing in us, for when He shall appear we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.

First, our Lord's temptations came to Him always from without, never from within. His holy soul could not be tempted by the unholy things which His eyes looked upon. His impressions through the senses never excited desire in Him. In this respect He was like holy Adam in the garden before Satan tempted him. Our temptations, on the contrary, come to us from both sources, and just as frequently they come from within. The experience of saintly men and women, shut in by monastery walls or otherwise, has ever been that the real source of temptations is not the world without but that world within of their own unholy, restless, evil nature.

Second, our Lord's temptations always began with Satan. Satan sought Jesus; He never sought Satan. To us too Satan comes; however, not to begin but to *finish* the sinful act proposed by the temptation. "Every man is tempted," says James, "when he is drawn away of *his own lust,* and enticed" (1:14). Judas was a thief; his covetous heart loved the gold better than the Master. It was only when the plan was conceived and formed, that is *toward the end,* that Satan came to hasten and accomplish it (Luke 22:3; John 13:2, 27).

Third, in vain did Satan scrutinize the innermost being of Christ for anything that belonged to him, anything similar to him; there never was a temptation however subtle which ever enabled him to find any such thing. How different with us in whom Satan always finds

something which he can claim as his own, and affords him a foothold on our souls.

Fourth, in all His temptations Christ never made the least effort to help Himself; Himself He could not save. In His extremities, when tempted, He turned to the Word; He appropriated the promise, trusted the Promisor, and was delivered. "Not as I will, but as thou wilt" was the uniform expression and attitude of His holy soul. We almost invariably seek to help ourselves, looking for some way of escape of our own providing. The Lord Jesus said: "Get thee behind me, Satan." We, like mother Eve, frequently enter into discussion with Satan and are overcome. Christ overcame *instantaneously*. The victory immediately followed the temptation and was almost simultaneous. Not so with us. Owing to a lurking fondness for the thing to which we are tempted fondness or love not even self-confessed, we *hesitate*; and again, owing to a lack of foresight we overcome only after we have been already half-defeated. Paul says in Ephesians 1:8, ". . .in all wisdom and prudence." Part of wisdom is prudence. Be ye prudent as serpents, says our Lord. Prudence, contracted from the Latin *providens*, means *foresight*. "Watch and pray," i.e., cultivate foresight; it is by the lack of these that temptations overtake us unawares. Christ so abhorred sin that He never tolerated its approach, even though He receiveth sinners and eateth with them (Luke 15:2). We frequently not only let sin approach us but apparently do not fear its presence—not consciously perhaps, but like Peter, quite confident that the company of our Lord's enemies can have nothing tempting to us. We pray devoutly, "Lead us not into temptation," and then enter the very place where temptation lies in wait for us.

And there is still a *fifth* difference: in temptation we suffer not so much because moral evil surrounds us and solicits us; we are, alas, quite well used to that;

but because *our desire* is opposed and denied us and we cannot have our way. *Outwardly* we may oppose the temptation, although even outward, our feet well-nigh slipped; but *inwardly* by the very desire, we favored the evil and slipped altogether. For instance we discover a short cut through a trying difficulty or an escape by compromise from trial, and bravely refuse to avail ourselves of it. But oh, what long lingering look we cast behind. What secret regret, what self-pity, what silent tears of disappointment because we could not or dared not indulge our desire. Outwardly we conquered, inwardly we were defeated. With reference to our Lord, such a thing is utterly unthinkable. He never grieved on *His own behalf*. He grieved because that evil desire in the human heart, even in His disciples, opposes and grieves *God* and essentially seeks to rob, dishonor, dethrone Him. We suffer in behalf of ourselves; He suffered on behalf of God; He felt for God and His heart was aching within Him.

How great the distance between Him and us! How far are we still removed from the moral ideal! "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hand" (Psa. 138:8).

CHAPTER 9

THE TRANSFIGURATION

(Matt: 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36)

Introduction

The transfiguration scene is full of mystery chiefly because on this occasion Christ's experience lay wholly beyond the range of ordinary human happenings. He was born as all men are. He hungered, suffered, was weary; He slept and awoke even as we do. He died and was buried and this, too, shall be our portion. He rose again and we shall rise. But as regards the transfiguration, there is absolutely nothing in human experience that corresponds to it. If it had not been recorded we would never have asked: When and where was He transfigured? In other words, while the events of Christ's life such as we have mentioned are essential to the human existence, His transfiguration is wholly foreign to human life. That there should be such an anomaly in His life is unaccountable. There must be a solution somewhere.

And again, in the great events of His life we always find Christ supremely active. In His holy birth He took upon Himself the form of a servant. In His death He laid down His life in obedience to the commandment of His Father. Even in the crucifixion when He appeared most passive, He perfected the mighty instrument of faith of which He then became the Finisher. In His resurrection He again took up His life, He arose from the dead; even that was a personal act. Can the transfiguration be an exception? Apparently He was passive.

"He was transfigured before them," says the record. Can it be possible that in this one great event He was passive while in every other occurrence He was pre-eminently active? This difficulty, too, demands a solution.

Once again, every event in His life is full of personal comfort and benefit to the believing heart. His birth is the basic fact of my own holy birth; His death, the perennial source of life; His obedience and works of righteousness, the glorious raiment which covers and adorns my otherwise naked soul; but what comfort, what special operations of grace such as the conscious strengthening of faith and deepened sense of being a member of His body which I derive from the holy communion, can I trace directly to that mysterious event on the holy mount? We do not know. The reading of this account does not grip my soul. I am filled with wonder; I realize to some degree His greatness and spiritual beauty, a moral superiority which makes me more deeply conscious of my own unworthiness, but that is all; for the rest, it leaves me cold. In my hunger for spiritual comfort I turn to Luke 15 or John 14-17, but not to the account of the transfiguration.

And why is this?

The transfiguration is either not an actual occurrence in the life of our Lord, but an invention, an embellishment added to the apostolic record in a later period, or we have failed to grasp the true inner meaning of this event. As to the former supposition, we have positive evidence of the genuineness and authenticity of the record. Moreover, it was next to an impossibility for anyone living in the post-apostolic period to add anything to the written Gospels not originally belonging to it without having the fraud detected and exposed.

From our own experience, therefore, we believe, that the real scriptural significance has not been

understood owing to lack of insight and penetration into the profound significance of that Life to which this extraordinary experience, like all other experiences, must have been absolutely essential. And, therefore, we will endeavor to offer an explanation which, in our own opinion, makes the event indispensable to His life, adding to it wonderful glory and beauty.

The interpretation which we offer was suggested by Calvin, elaborated by Kuyper, and is shared by a few modern writers: Godet, F. B. Meyer, Henry Scott Holland, James Haughton, and others.

With this suggestion in mind we will attempt to interpret this wonderful event in the life of our Lord as we see it in the light of the Scriptures, mindful of the fact that in His light we shall see light (Psa. 36:9). We offer nothing of a speculative nature. What we cannot explain according to the Inspired Word, we leave unexplained. But where the Scripture leads the way we may confidently follow and reach conclusions that are surprising. Let us not fall into the delusion that the last word of scriptural interpretation has been spoken. We firmly believe that it has not and never will be in this present dispensation.

Calvin comments on Matthew 17:1 as follows: "We must first inquire for what purpose Christ clothed Himself with heavenly glory for a short time, and why He did not admit more than three of His disciples to be spectators. Some think that He did so in order to fortify them against the trial which they were soon to meet, arising from His Death. That does not appear to me to be the probable reason; for why should He have deprived the rest of the same remedy, or rather, why should He expressly forbid them to make known what they had seen till after the Resurrection; but because the result of the vision would be later than His Death? I have no doubt whatever that Christ intended to show *that He was not*

unwillingly dragged to death, but that He came forward of His own accord, to offer to the Father the sacrifice of obedience. The disciples were not made aware of this till Christ rose; nor was it even necessary that at the very moment of His Death they should perceive the Divine power of Christ so as to acknowledge it to be victorious on the Cross; but the instruction which they now received was intended to be useful at a future period, both to themselves and to us, that no man might take offense at the weakness of Christ, *as if it were by force and necessity that He had suffered. It would manifestly have been quite as easy for Christ to protect His body from death as to clothe it with heavenly glory.*

"We are thus taught that He was subjected to death because He wished it to be so; that He was crucified because He offered Himself. That same flesh which was crucified on the Cross and lay in the grave *might have been exempted from death and the grave;* for it had already partaken of the heavenly glory. We are also taught that, so long as Christ remained in the world bearing the form of a servant, and so long as His Majesty was concealed under the weakness of the flesh, nothing had been taken from Him, for it was of His own accord that He *emptied Himself* (Phil. 2:7), but now His Resurrection had drawn aside that veil by which His power had been concealed for a time" (Commentary on "A Harmony of the Evangelists," II, 303ff).

I. *The Transfiguration*

To the description of the transfiguration nothing can be added. The marvelous change in our Lord's outward form was marked by the shining of His face as the sun in its brightness. Luke says that the fashion of His face was altered. Mark does not mention the shining face. The three Synoptists mention the effect upon His

raiment. Matthew says, "His raiment was white as the light." Mark records, "And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them." Hence it was a splendor not of earth. Luke says, "His raiment was white and glistening."

And that is all. Yet it is enough to give us an answer to the very natural question: "Was this glory divine or human?" This has been answered most generally that it was divine. We cite only two authorities. M. Henry says: "He took on him the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7). He drew a veil over the glory of His Godhead; but now in His Transfiguration He put by that veil and appeared in the form of God (Phil. 2:6)." And Meyer in his commentary on Matthew says, "In the case of Christ, the brightness proceeded from His own Divine nature and life, the *doxa* of which radiated from within."

By comparing Scripture with Scripture we obtain the Scripture's own interpretation. The two prominent features of His transfiguration glory were the shining of His face and the glittering whiteness of His raiment. Compare this with Matthew 13:37, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," and Daniel 12:3, "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament." In Revelation 19:8, where the glory of the Lamb's Wife is described, we read: "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white." The word rendered *white* (*lampros*, like *leuka* in the Synoptists) means bright shining, glittering, as in Revelation 22:16, "the bright morning star."

In these three instances a glory is described which is identical with the transfiguration glory—the shining face and dazzling raiment—which are also ascribed to men. Hence the glory seen in the transfiguration is a *human* glory. This glory moreover was *seen* by the three favored disciples. They witnessed it. Apparently it had

an overpowering effect upon them, as is very natural and often found in Scripture under similar circumstances. Luke relates: "But Peter and they that were with him were (weighed down) with sleep," but keeping themselves awake all through. Thayer adds, "for they had overcome the force of sleep with which they were weighed down." "They saw his glory."

Did a human being ever behold the glory of God? When Moses prayed, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory," Jehovah said, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee. . . . Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, *and live*. . . . And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts–," that is, the reflection of the receding glory,–"but my face shall not be seen" (Ex. 33:18-25). We might cite more instances of similar import, but this is sufficient to show that no man ever saw the glory of God. Yet the disciples beheld the transfiguration glory. Does that not clearly indicate that it was not the divine glory which they saw, but the glory of the transfigured Son of Man?

And since no human being ever has seen the glory of God with the physical eye, the Scriptures never attempt to describe that glory. In the vision of the sixth chapter of Isaiah, the prophet beholds Jehovah in human form, sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, i.e., in the heavenly temple. The glory is described as that of a trailing garment, as Delitzsch calls it, "the state robe of the Undescribable which fills the whole of space" (Commentary, I, 145). The description of the Son in Ezekiel 1 is not that of God Himself. Daniel describes a glory but that, too, in anthropomorphic terms, similar to that in Revelation 1:13-16 where John describes the glory of the glorified and exalted Son of Man. In the

Theophanies of the Old Testament it was always the Logos who appeared in human form. "The Incarnation is the truth of all anthropomorphisms" (Delitzsch).

Christ's Humanity

The transformation glory, therefore, according to the consensus of the Scriptures was a human glory. "The transfiguration," says Rev. James Haughton, "(is) typical of our glorified humanity in Christ." True, it is the glory of the God-man but the glory of the God-man is either divine or human. The glory is never divine-human. There is no blending of the two. There is a divine-human *Person,* but not a divine-human *nature* nor a divine-human glory. The composite adjective divine-human may be applied only to His Person, and not to anything else in Him. The Logos cannot be transfigured. Therefore the glory of transfiguration is not that of the Logos. Notice how carefully the Lord Himself distinguishes the different kinds of glory in Luke 9:26: "When he"–the Son of man–"shall come in his *own* glory, and in His *Father's,* and of the *holy angels.*" God loves order. There is in all His creation no mixing or blending of natures and beings foreign to each other. In the transfiguration we see Him in His *own* glory which, however, was then not as great as in His final glorification, as we shall see. And in the God-man it is the human nature which is glorified, it is the glorified Man Jesus. Hence upon the holy mount we behold a human glory and a human experience.

Again, let us consult the Scripture with reference to *transfiguration.* In I Corinthians 15:51 Paul says: "Behold, I show you a mystery"–to him divinely revealed–"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." True, Paul uses here a Greek term different from that used by Matthew and Mark in their several reports of

this event, and Luke again another; but the meaning is the same, i.e., transformation, or transfiguration. Matthew and Mark use *metamorpho*, to change into another form. Paul uses *allasso*, simply to change, to transform. Those saints living in the time of the Parousia shall not die but be transformed; and from I Thessalonians 4:17 we learn that their transfiguration shall be immediately followed by translation to meet the Lord in the air and then to be forever with the Lord. Of Enoch we read that "he walked with God and he was not, for God took him" (Gen. 5:24). In Hebrews 11:5 we have the inspired commentary upon this passage in Genesis. "Enoch was translated that he should not see death; . . . because God had translated him." Elijah is another instance of translation, undoubtedly preceded by transfiguration, for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

From these passages we learn the following particulars:

1) Transformation belongs to our human nature.
2) Transfiguration is but the prelude of translation.
3) They who are translated escape death.
4) Translation is, therefore, the end of a man's personal existence on earth.
5) There are two exits from this earthly life into the life beyond, death or translation.

Applying this to Christ we find:

1) Transfiguration belonged to His human nature and was to Him a normal human experience.
2) His transfiguration would lead us to expect translation.
3) By translation He would have escaped death.
4) The transfiguration, therefore, might have been the closing scene of His personal life on earth.
5) To Christ in the transfiguration these two exits were clearly presented:

a) that by translation in His own transfiguration;

b) that of death by Moses and Elijah who talked with Him about His decease to be accomplished in Jerusalem.

And here it is noteworthy that the word *decease* in the Greek is *exodus*, which means issue, departure, outgoing. It is a colorless word. Whether one departs by translation or by death it is in both cases an exodus, an outgoing. In the holy mount there were set before Him two outgoings: translation from the holy mount, or death by crucifixion at Jerusalem. And we have reached this astonishing conclusion not by some clever bit of speculation, but most naturally and legitimately from scriptural data.

Have these findings scriptural support apart from the references already cited?

Official and Personal

Before we proceed with this point let us emphasize the distinction between His *official* and *personal* life. Though in fact He is always the Mediator, yet He does not always act as such. His eating and drinking, His sleeping or resting by the wayside, are acts purely of a personal nature. His prayer may be either personal or official. In Gethsemane it is personal; in John 17 the High Priestly prayer is official. In all His temptations He acts as the second Adam officially. When He descends into Jordan at His baptism He acts officially. When He takes His daily bath in some river the act is personal. This distinction is important and should not be evaded.

Sinless and Therefore Deathless

Now we resume the discussion and repeat our question: Have these findings stated above scriptural

support apart from the references upon which they are grounded?

Considering our Lord not as the Lamb of God slain for the sins of the world, but in His personal life, which of those two exits, death or translation, would be most appropriate? "He knew no sin," writes Paul. Peter says, "Neither was guile found in his mouth." And what does Scripture teach regarding death? That it is the wages of sin. *Wages* in the plural, comprehending *natural, spiritual, eternal,* and *second* death. If death is the wages of sin, can the sinless Man die? If sin is the cause and death the effect, can the latter be found in the absence of the former? Is it possible, would it be just, that the holy Son of man should die? For death is sin's penalty, and He had no sin. And we say emphatically, NO! As the holy Man Jesus *apart* from His official priestly bearing of our sins, He could not die. He was absolutely sinless, therefore absolutely deathless. We know that this is a debated question of long standing, but standing on the revelation of the Word of God regarding this matter, we maintain that the One who was absolutely sinless was absolutely deathless. Death could not touch Him. The root not being there, there could be no fruit. It is only when voluntarily He takes upon Himself our sins and their penalty that He can die. And then He dies *our* death and that necessarily was the accursed death of the cross. *Our* sins, *our* penalty, *our* death, not His *own*. Personally He could not die. It was a moral impossibility.

We are touching here a great and awful subject. Death is among us. Our life, even that of the healthiest and strongest, is a continual dying. "Dying thou shalt die"; how expressive and how true is this ancient Hebraism. What tears, what heartbreaks, what deep darkness of sorrow and loneliness has death brought into this world, where everything reminds us that "in

the midst of life we are in death." Yet, it was by sin that death entered the world and "passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). If sin had not come in there would have been no death. Death is not a divine creation; it does not belong to His original order of things. In spite of the numberless graves which have turned fair mother earth into a vast graveyard, we insist that death is an intruder, unnatural, abnormal, not eternal, for the hour shall come when even death shall be no more, being swallowed up in victory. It has been here throughout the centuries only as God's divine protest against, as well as condemnation and penalty of, sin.

If Adam had not sinned man would never have died. What then? Would he have lived forever in this world? Not necessarily. We only mean to say that to sinless man the exit from this preliminary existence would not have been by the gates of death but by transformation followed by translation. And so it should have been with the last Adam in His own sinless, holy, personal life, apart from His office as Mediator.

Ministry and Sacrifice

Now consider the time of this event in the historical development of His life. The Synoptists agree in the main that it was six days after the confession of Peter, when our Lord began to show unto His disciples that He must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things by the elders and chief priest and scribes, and be killed and raised again the third day. "On the one hand," says Godet, "in the energetic profession of faith by Peter, and by His other disciples, He reaps the fruit of the labors to which He had devoted Himself during the last two years; on the other, He enters upon a new work in making known to them for the first time His approaching

sufferings and His ignominious death. This moment, then, marks the apogee of the public ministry of Jesus, and, if we may venture to say it, the point of transition from action to passion" (*Biblical Studies*, p. 111). And at this momentous crisis, when He is about to enter the deep shadow of His passion and death, there is opened unto Him this wonderful possibility of closing His personal life on earth without cross and death, and through painless *transfiguration* and translation to enter heaven. We emphasize His *personal* life; officially He must (Gr. *emelle*) accomplish His outgoing at Jerusalem.

And so the moment had come for the Son of Man to depart in the normal way according to the divine ordinance of creation from the Holy Mount (probably Mt. Hermon) in Northern Galilee.

According to Philippians 2:7, 8, there were two humiliations in Christ's life. The one in verse 7 was finished at the end of His personal life. From the throne He had humbled Himself to the manger, emptying Himself of His divine glory and majesty, taking upon Him the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of men. As the Servant of Jehovah He had served the people. He Himself said: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). Here He divides His life into two parts: *ministry* and *sacrifice*. So in Philippians 2:8 we read, "And (while he was found) in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, *and* became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." This twofold humiliation—*first*, from the throne to the manger; *second*, to the death of the cross—is clearly set forth in this passage as service and sacrifice.

When did the second humiliation take place? We do not hesitate to answer, at His transfiguration. He had come to the necessary unfolding of His personal life. His service was ended. It was complete. Nothing more

could be added to it. Then the transfiguration took place. As He was a holy Man, death could not touch Him. He was transfigured. He was ready to return whence He came. Already heavenly company surrounded Him; He was breathing the very atmosphere of the heavenly life. One more step and He would have departed and entered His heavenly home. He was about to accomplish His decease (outgoing) on the mount of transfiguration in Galilee. We close this section with a quotation from *The Holy Spirit in the Prayerbook* by Rev. James Houghton, p. 304:

"It is plain that the Epiphany Collect does not bring out the entire truth and object of our praying in the phrase, 'fruition of Thy glorious Godhead': *since our Saviour's Manhood, as the scene on the Holy Mount shows,* is glorious, and the saints must have complete fruition of that. Equally true is it that the collect for Transfiguration Day, beautiful as it is, falls short in this point, that redeemed mankind will be privileged not merely to 'behold,' but also to *share* the King's 'beauty.' The Bride shall herself be clothed with the splendor that is His, through her possession of His inward Life in the Spirit . . . One of those ancient hymns (we sing) exhibits in a simple and real way the beliefs and hopes of the early Christians.

O wondrous type! O vision fair
Of glory that the Church shall share
Which Christ upon the mountain shows,
When brighter than the sun He glows!

With shining face and bright array
Christ deigns to manifest today
What glory shall be theirs above
Who joy in God with perfect love."

II. Moses and Elias

"And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:30,31).

The appearance of Moses and Elias at this decisive moment is of highest importance and significance. They are representative men of the Old Covenant. Moses stands before us as the mediator of the Old Covenant. "... it (the Law) was ordained by angels in the hands of a mediator" (Gal. 3:19). Elias we do not consider as a representative of prophecy, for the plain reason that he did not belong to that line of prophets and prophetic men who have enriched the divine revelation to Israel with the wealth of Messianic hope and expectation. Both men were zealous preachers of the divine righteousness. Moses, as the Lawgiver, was the revealer of that righteousness; Elias had persistently demanded that Israel fulfill that righteousness. And under both these men Israel had miserably failed in its worldwide mission to be the visible embodiment of the divine righteousness in the earth. And after all this failure, *who* then was to fulfill that righteousness and meet its tremendous claims and demands for the salvation of the world?

At this decisive moment Jesus stood transfigured before them. In His own personal life He had fully met all the requirements of the divine righteousness. Every jot and tittle of the law He had obeyed in every detail. In Him the perfect Ideal of moral purity and excellency was *realized*. Was the law still unfulfilled? Does not that law demand the death of the sinner, saying, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4)? Hence the deep significance of the meeting of these two glorified saints with our transfigured Lord ready to depart, talking with Him about His outgoing to be accomplished at Jerusalem.

"This painful end to His life is the subject of His conversation with the two great representatives of the Old Covenant, and is the one which, as He declares to them, He prefers and accepts. And they were fitted to understand this preference by the very contrast between the departure which Jesus chooses and their own. Had not one of them 'expired,' as the Rabbis say, 'from the embrace of the eternal'? Had not the other ascended in a chariot of fire? Jesus initiates them into the victory of perfect charity. He turns His back upon the arch of triumph which rises before Him and resolutely decides in favor of the pathway of shadows which leads to heaven through the grave. 'Love,' says the Song of Solomon, 'is stronger than death.' The Transfiguration proves that it is stronger than something which is stronger than death itself; stronger than heaven and the attractions of heaven for the most heavenly mind. Jesus had the power to ascend; He exercises a free choice, and prefers to descend and take this road to Jerusalem" (Godet, *Biblical Studies*, p. 113).

Every word spoken in the holy mount on this occasion is fraught with meaning. Moses and Elias talked with Him about His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. The word translated *should* (Gr. *emelle*) might be rendered *must*—"as being fixed by necessity, or Divine appointment" (Thayer). As the God-man He is to obey, He is under the necessity of the Eternal Counsel. Hence He must accomplish His outgoing at Jerusalem. And yet His obedience to the commandment was voluntary, for He converted the necessity into liberty. And thus, though under the pressure of highest necessity yet He walked in perfect liberty.

The word "accomplish" is very comprehensive. *Plero* in the Greek means to fill full, to supply that which is lacking. The word was addressed only to Jesus; He was to make full. Was there anything lacking? On

Calvary He cried out, "It is finished," "*tetelestai*," the end is reached. On the holy mount it was still unfinished. And that was the message of the heavenly visitors. This they emphasized; it was to be *accomplished;* and that at *Jerusalem.* As yet there was no full accomplishment. Moses and Elias were there in glory, yet His decease at Jerusalem was still unaccomplished. Their salvation and present glory rested on a still *prospective* Sacrifice. The atonement was still lacking reality. Will God be satisfied with a prospective sacrifice for sin?

What constitutes in sacrifice its moral value, beauty and preciousness? We answer: Its voluntariness. And our Lord had already proved His willingness by His Self-emptying and Self-humiliation. Was not that sufficient? Was not the total surrender of Himself in the Incarnation and up to this very moment the very soul of the Sacrifice; and as such greater than the physical shedding of His blood? Did not Jehovah stay Abraham's hand when he was about to slay his son Isaac, and then call his willingness *obedience* (Gen. 22:18)? And in Hebrews 11:17 it says, "Abraham offered up Isaac," whom after all he did not offer up. To David He said: "Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build a house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart" (II Chron 6:8). In both cases there was a *prospective* sacrifice and service, and although never accomplished, God accepted it. Why not so with reference to Christ.

To this, which seems feasible, we answer: One greater than Abraham and David is here. With respect to His *servants,* God took the will for the deed, but with reference to His *Son* He would not, but by the mouth of Moses and Elias demanded that His outgoing be *accomplished.* And that was for the following reason: There was no absolute necessity either for the shedding

of Isaac's blood or for the building of the temple by David. Both were typical and awaiting fulfillment in and by Christ. God was willing to accept *intentional* obedience because the *actual* obedience was to be rendered by Christ. Every Passover lamb, every offering in the Levitical service was anticipatory. But it could not always remain such. God demands actuality. There is a fullness of time when the prospective can no longer remain prospective, but must become actual. "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son" (Gal. 4:4). That part of the divine purpose had been accomplished. Now that which was still lacking had to be supplied. The lack was in Christ's still unfinished work. It called for the climax, the crowning test of His willingness, His actual death. His willingness was *to endure the test of the personal experience*. With His whole soul He was to live through and pass through the entire process of the Sacrifice.

If Christ had ascended from the holy mount the atonement would never have been accomplished. Hence the appearance of Moses and Elias. Our Lord there stood with all His faculties quickened and strengthened with the power to sense as never before. It was in the transfiguration that He received an impression so vivid, so profound that it was burned as it were into the very substance of His Self-consciousness. And the impression was this, that He must accomplish His outgoing, not from the holy mount, but at Jerusalem; He must live through, pray through, believe through, suffer through, and die through all that the Father had ordained. Every step of the way of sorrows He must take—not a step may be avoided, not a drop in the cup be left untasted. And thus He was to accomplish His decease at Jerusalem.

III. *Peter's Suggestion*

In the preceding pages we have dwelled somewhat

upon the externals of the transfiguration. Peter's suggestion of building three tabernacles gives us more of an insight into the inner soul life of both the Master and the disciple.

As related by the Synoptists, Peter said: "Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." Although he himself did not realize the full import of his offer, yet the suggestion of making three tabernacles interprets the thoughts and emotions which filled and controlled him when he witnessed the glory and perhaps even grasped the meaning of the conversation. Peter's mental and spiritual attitude had not been changed during the six intervening days between his profession recorded in Matthew 16 and the transfiguration. We remember how strenuously he then opposed the Lord's declaration with reference to His approaching passion and death. These gloomy predictions came to Peter as a shocking disappointment. He had dreamed of a glorious career for the Master, victory over all His enemies, the universal dominion as King upon the throne of His father David. But the Master predicted complete defeat, shame, disgrace, even loss of life. Of course impetuous Peter resented this with all the fervor of his fiery spirit. Such a thing was unthinkable. He knew enough of the Master to realize that it all depended upon His own will; if He would He could save Himself, and therefore, that imperative and compassionate: "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee."

The Lord's answer plainly indicates that this mind of Peter was not of the Spirit but of the flesh. The flesh will have no cross; it opposes the cross. It cherishes the very things which the cross condemns. The flesh seeks the glorification of the self-life, the cross its destruction. The flesh labors for its own improvement; self-betterment is a favored term. The

cross demands its crucifixion; in fact by the cross the flesh stands already judged and condemned. The flesh prophesies of wonderful achievements in the future both in the individual and in the race, asking, Is not the world steadily advancing in self-improvement? The cross utterly repudiates such prophesying and counts the flesh unprofitable and unable to please God, being at enmity toward God; the carnal mind is death. And the flesh repudiates the cross; it has no use for it; the cross only discourages every effort at self-improvement, however honest and well-meant. Indeed the cross misrepresents and slanders the flesh. The flesh is at times wonderfully religious and, like Saul when he persecuted the Church, intends to please God. Its worship is devout, aesthetic and refined. Its conventions are popular; it cradles the masses upon the gentle indulations of an emotional mysticism. It aims to attract the rich, the cultured, the liberal-minded, and has no use nor any gospel for the poor, the fallen, the degraded. It loves to tabernacle on the holy mount, but refuses the outgoing at Jerusalem. It cleans and polishes the outside of the platter; for the uncleanness of the inside it has no eye. And although Peter was wholly unconscious of all this, yet it is the natural outcome of his carnal mind. Peter was neither the first exponent of this opposition nor did Christ's rebuke convert him. He cherished the sentiment even though the Lord told him that it was offensive to Him, and persisted in his whole mental attitude to oppose the Spirit of Christ.

Those last six days Peter had continued in this carnal mind and in the holy mount Peter again emphasized it although in a different form. Beholding the glory of the Lord, although not yet fully recovered from the overwhelming effect upon his sensorium, he recalls Christ's word of His passion and death six days ago, and in the glad reaction upon his spirit he cries out, "Master, it

is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, one for Moses and one for Elias."

As sincerely and impetuously as he had opposed the one, suffering and death, so enthusiastically he hails the other, glory and felicity. And as he perceives that Moses and Elias are about to depart he invites their continued presence and offers them the shelter of tabernacles.

The unspoken thought in Peter's mind is apparent; perhaps Peter was unconscious of it, but the workings of the subconscious mind are strange and past finding out. He meant to say, though other words burst forth from his lips, "Lord, this is the very thing that I have desired for Thee—no going up to Jerusalem to suffer and die, but this marvelous display of glory, this congenial company, this heavenly peace and fellowship." Though in a different form, it was the echo of the same spirit, "Lord, this shall not be unto thee."

And how did Peter's loving suggestions affect our transfigured Lord? Six days previous He had met Peter's rebuke with the unexpected exclamation: "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." These words clearly indicate how profoundly our Lord's being was affected by Peter's rebuke. Why was this favorite disciple and confidential friend hateful, offensive, like Satan, to Christ? Satan's chief occupation wherever we meet him in Scripture seems always to be that of tempting, resisting, or accusing some saint of God, such as Job, David, Joshua, and here our Lord Himself. If Peter acted towards our Lord as Satan, the Lord must have been tempted. Surely with tempting power Peter's word assailed Him, and all the more so because it was inspired by the ardent affection of his heart. Let us not deny that on this occasion our Lord was tempted. Was there a single day

in His whole life wherein He was not tempted? We doubt it. And this was a temptation, real, terrible, full of darkness and danger.

This shows that in Peter's word there was an appeal to something in Christ's holy human nature which was made in the likeness of sinful flesh—the use of His divine power He had put by. Though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor. Our infirmities and weaknesses He carried and endured, not only symbolically but in reality. Hence the prospect of pain, physical and mental, affected Him just as it does us. The very thought of it as it came nearer every day filled His soul with an agony of fear and apprehension which we cannot estimate. The removal of the cup would have been to His human mind and heart unutterable relief. Hence Peter's imperative rebuke, "Lord, this shall not be unto thee," struck Him with the force of a violent temptation which shook the very foundation of His soul.

Our Ego and Our Nature

And here let us once more distinguish in our humanity between our ego and our nature. Intimately connected as they are, the distinction may be difficult to realize, and yet it is there. In Christ we clearly see it. In Gethsemane it is His human nature which in deepest distress cries out, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." And it is His Ego which immediately steps in saying: "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." In the disciplined saint we see the same, at least in principle. He wants it to be in fullest reality because he loves the will of God, but his nature shrinks from putting the cup already in his hands, to his lips.

Hence the distinction is correct. And our nature's attitude towards suffering is normal. It is our nature's

protest against sin and its violent effects. In its deepest ground, sin is to our *originally* holy human nature profoundly unnatural. Sin brings suffering, and we were not made for suffering. Hence we shrink from it; we seek to avoid it. Suffering and sorrow hurt us. And our compassionate heavenly Father intends that it should hurt; for so it may become corrective. With reference to Israel, hardened and impenitent, Jeremiah (5:3) complains, "O Lord, . . . thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved." The Dutch and French versions have it: "They have felt no pain"; the German: "They feel not." They were past feeling–a most dangerous condition indeed. Our Lord does not afflict us willingly but that we may become partakers of His holiness. And that is the very reason why He intends that it should hurt; why He does not remove the rod because of our cryings until we have learned the lesson.

However, this natural shrinking from pain, physical and mental, this instinctive endeavor to avoid or escape from it, is not necessarily *sinful*. We should not condemn it as such, either in ourselves or in others. Neither should we allow it to control us. Not our feelings but our judgment, illuminated by His Spirit, should be in control. So it was even with our Lord. The cup came from the Father. His sensitive human nature dreaded it; but He says: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11).

But this shrinking from suffering on the part of our human nature does become sinful the moment when our person, our ego controlled by our natural feelings, opposes the will of God; when we pray with our Lord, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," omitting, "nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

With reference to Christ, however, it was not so, for He was holy. Nevertheless there was conflict, sharp

and painful. The conflict was not between His ego and the divine will, but between the natural recoil from suffering and His ego; between His horror from what the ordeal contained and His own inflexible determination to do the will of the Father. He never even in thought opposed that will. There was no prospect nor the shadow of a desire ever to shirk or to evade it. Let us repeat this most important distinction: *The conflict was not between Christ's will and the will of the Father, but between His human nature, weakened by the sin of the race, and His own personal determination always to please the Father.*

Satanic Influences

In this conflict we do not deny active satanic influences. Satan knows from long experiences how to use our human infirmities for his own purposes and always to our hurt. The Scripture gives us sufficient information on this subject. In Zecharias' vision of Joshua, the High Priest standing before Jehovah was resisted by Satan (Zech. 3:1-7). Joshua is here the type of Christ our only High Priest. Even as Joshua so was our Lord in all His ministrations resisted by Satan. The long conflict between Satan and the woman's seed, begun in Paradise, reaches its climax there and unto the end. All the resources under his control in the natural and spiritual realms Satan exhausted in his attempts to defeat our Lord. If he seeks to devour weak saints in his going about as a ravenous beast, how much more must he have attempted to break to pieces our Lord Himself, who had come to destroy his works and in the final denouement to cast out his person into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10).

But the Gospels are generally silent on this subject.

Even apart from the satanic element the opposition of His own human nature is more than sufficient to account for the conflict in His own soul.

And this conflict became very sharp in the transfiguration. His human nature saw an escape from, a shortcut of all that threatening ordeal and approaching death. The present glory, the beckoning entrance of the opened heavens into the eternal glory mightily *appealed* to His human nature; and at the same time that human nature was mightily *repelled* by the things awaiting Him in Jerusalem. We cannot describe the antithesis as it presented itself to our Lord. How close and intimate is the relation between our person and our nature. How mightily does our nature influence our person. There is no conflict so sharp and so painful as that between these two. And that was the conflict in Christ's soul on the holy mount—a conflict which cannot be denied without doing injustice to His humanity.

Consciousness and Realization

The question has often been asked: Did the Lord Jesus, in entering upon His public ministry after His baptism, *fully realize* all that lay before Him? Surely He was deeply conscious at that time of the fact that He was the Son of the Father and the Mediator of the world. But was His consciousness capable of enlargement? Did He enter more profoundly into the realization of these exalted dignities and responsibilities? And we answer: Since Christ was truly man, we cannot doubt it. With reference to ourselves, we may know a thing and even be deeply conscious of it, and yet fail to realize it fully. Says the psychologist: "We believe many a fact of which we fail to get a realizing sense" (Baldwin, *Elements of Psychology*, p. 252). We have promised to make a certain sacrifice, like

Hannah, for instance, who gave her still unborn child unto the Lord. She was fully conscious of the fact; she never regretted it, but did she fully realize it so long as she had him with her? No, indeed. But when he grew up a boy, six or seven years old, ah, then truly "the realizing sense" took possession of her soul. And she never did realize it so much as on the day she took him to Shiloh, kissed him goodbye, and left him in the hands of strangers and re-entered her now childless home. Then she had a realization which might have caused her to repent if she had not been the godly woman who could say: ". . . as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord" (I Sam. 1:28).

In a similar sense we believe that our Lord gradually came to realize the vast significance of the sacrifice demanded of Him, the depth and height of the task of saving the world. We have no direct scriptural reference to support our statement unless it be Hebrews 2:17, where it is said that in *all things* it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren; and that by itself is sufficient ground. This gradual realization of still future conscious facts may or may not have been an effect of weakness, but it was not sinful. Moreover, are there not instances on record when it seemed that suddenly He came to the realization of something of which He had long been fully conscious? Look, for instance, at John 11:33-35: "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept."

What was the cause of this weeping? Sympathy with the mourning sisters whose sorrow He was so quickly to turn into greatest joy? We do not believe it. Such weeping would have been shallow and insincere. But we do believe that the scene at the tomb, the sorrow,

the bereavement inflicted by cruel death, death in its awful character as the wages of sin, suddenly gave Him there and then a fuller, more comprehensive realization of death and sin and of the whole world's awful condition—sinning, sorrowing, suffering, weeping, dying and perishing, under the awful dominion of sin and corruption, with nothing to stay its progress but Himself, and the Work still to be accomplished. And so overwhelming was the realization to Him that He groaned in the Spirit, was troubled and wept.

Similar instances may be found in John 12:27; 13:21; Matthew 26:37, 38.

But it was only when in the transfiguration He stood talking with His heavenly visitors about His decease that must be accomplished in Jerusalem, that the fullest, the most comprehensive realization of the whole matter flashed in upon Him as never before.

Now and Then

Our knowledge of *transfiguration* and *translation* is very limited; yet from scriptural data we know that it is the end of our present, preliminary existence on earth, and the entrance upon the completion of the final unfolding of our personality. For God's saints it is the transition from sin to absolute holiness, from mortality and corruption to immortality and incorruptibility, from the temporal to the eternal. In First Corinthians 13:9,10,12, Paul gives us a glimpse of the wonderful and far-reaching effect of this change upon our whole mental and spiritual being. He says: "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. . . .For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

The antithesis of verses 9 and 10 is our present

imperfection—we know and prophesy in part, and our future completeness when "that which is in part shall be done away." The former is *now*, the latter *then*. Transfiguration is the beginning of the *then*. It is the beginning of the completeness which is the result of the final unfolding of our human personality. We shall have reached the end and destiny of our individual existence according to the divine, eternal purpose. Paul's words imply an enlarged *horizon* and a *perfect vision;* of course only in human degree.

And of all this *transfiguration* is the beginning. The glorification may not be immediately complete, no more than that of our Lord after the resurrection until the ascension, but it was the beginning. The transfigured one no longer belongs to this present order of existence. It is no more *now* but *then*.

Applying this to our Lord's transfiguration we find that He must have had the *enlarged horizon* and the *perfect vision*. His consciousness was so enlarged that He could scan the whole field of His vast activities in time and eternity which the Father had assigned to Him. His faculties had unfolded their greatest excellency of perfection; thus enabling Him to comprehend at once all that lay within the almost boundless horizon of His consciousness. And all that He beheld stood out in the bold relief of eternity's light.

True, His transfiguration did not become translation, but that was the result of His own holy choice and decision in the holy mount. And we believe that the making of that choice demanded the larger horizon and clearer vision both of consciousness and realization which pertain to the transfigured state. In this respect also, the transfiguration was essential. He could not attain that all-comprehending realization which would make the final choice possible without the larger viewpoint and increased potency of His faculties which He

received in the transformation. A parallel instance we have in His baptism and its attending signs. Without those He could not have obtained that complete consciousness of His being the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. This whole scene, especially the Father's approval from heaven, left upon His soul impressions indelible and indestructible. And it was this impression which was the mighty factor which obtained Him the victory over Satan.

Even so here. The greatest temptation of His whole experience is upon Him. The most far-reaching decision resulting in the most important choice of His divine-human existence He is about to make. The issues depending upon that choice are eternal. The limitations of His human nature in its state of humiliation and incompleteness prevent Him from having adequate realization. Therefore, just as at Jordan, He needs the direct revelation from on high which comes to Him in the transfiguration and the Father's approval of His final choice.

Realization and Choice

This was necessary to *full* vision of what the sacrifice involved, the tremendous decision and choice which He was to make. The choice of the first Adam was so fatal because being already under the hypnotic influence of moral evil he could have no adequate perception and realization of the issues depending upon his choice. It is always so with reference to the foolish choices of men. The second Adam's choice must be, therefore, in every particular the very opposite. It must be the result of the complete realization of all the factors and circumstances of the case. If the choice of the first Adam brought upon the race sin and destruction, the choice of the second Adam must bring eternal redemption and everlasting life. And therefore the making

of that choice required the enlarged horizon and perfect vision of transformation.

The point is this, that without this adequate realization there could be no proper final choice. We do not affirm that there was in our Lord at any time any lack of decision regarding the final issue. His perfect willingness to do the Father's will was unquestionable. His willingness never wavered. It was always the unbending determination of His holy soul to accomplish this only after He had the fullest vision of its scope and importance. And this implies choice.

Our Lord never *reversed* any of His former decisions. His decisions were always in perfect harmony with the divine purpose concerning Himself and His work, guided as He was by the Holy Spirit.

And what did our Lord see in the holy mount? He discerned most clearly the two exits set before Him: departure from this life either by translation or by the death of crucifixion. If He chooses the former He shall escape the latter. But what will this mean to the human race which He had come to redeem? He will enter heaven *alone*. Heaven will receive Him, and then shut its gates behind Him, never to be reopened. Not a human soul can enter for there will be no Mediator. Even Moses and Elias cannot remain in glory, neither Abraham, Isaac, nor Jacob, nor any others of them that have entered the eternal rest. They are in their present state only on the ground of a *promised* atonement which in that case would *never* be accomplished. Heaven will remain empty. The many mansions in the Father's house will never be occupied by any of His people; neither will He Himself prepare a place for them, for He will never receive them unto Himself and they will never be where He is. There will be no Lamb slain and therefore no ransom paid; therefore there can be no redemption, no salvation reaching to the ends of the earth, no resurrection, no

final rewards of saints, no victory nor eternal glory. The Lamb's wife will never make herself ready, for there will never be a bride, His church, His body. No kingdom of righteousness and no new heaven and new earth, but eternal death in utter darkness. Faith, hope and love forever lost in the final catastrophe. Satan will have triumphed and the Eternal Counsel come to naught and the Triune God defeated, thwarted and dethroned. Such must have been the realization which came upon His spirit in the short moment of His transfiguration.

Can we wonder at the words spoken in Jerusalem, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth *alone*"?

And we know the result; it was and is full of glory and victory. Of Himself we have not a word. But there was an act. "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8).

This was the completion of that self-emptying begun in the incarnation. Without the humiliation the incarnation would have been of no avail. The two together, the self-emptying and the self-humbling, are the rock of our eternal salvation, the ground of all our hope and confidence.

And then when all was over, the disciples lifted up their eyes and saw no man but Jesus only (Matt. 17:8). The glory was departed. With His own fingers He caused it to fade away leaving no trace behind. The transfiguration was a matter of the past, but it was not followed by translation. The choice was not only made, but was already in process of execution.

Yes, His choice! That was our Lord's personal act in the holy mount. His transfiguration was not merely a passive experience granted Him for encouragement and for that of His disciples. The record contains no

suggestion of any such thing. If encouragement was meant, Moses and Elias spoiled it by their talking to Him about His outgoing at Jerusalem. Such interpretation is a human invention; it is mechanical; there is no Scripture for it. To us His transformation, a scene full of action, is crowned with the climax of the greatest act of obedience. For choices are acts, the most far-reaching in any rational life. This was the greatest act in the history of the world. It was the most important choice of all the Lord's human choices. As the Logos before time began He said: "Lo, I come to do thy will, Oh God." As the Logos *incarnate* He had chosen again and again to please the Father only, but nowhere do we find a choice so important, so vital, as in the transfiguration. It was essential; it could not be evaded; the time had come for it to become translated into the world of fact.

Let us emphasize that it was the human choice. As the choice of the Logos before time began was that of the *Son of God,* so was this in the holy mount the choice of the *Son of Man.* There is in Him the divine and the human; a divine will and a human will, a divine consciousness and a human consciousness. What had been clear from eternity in the former gradually became clear to the latter in time. It was subject to comparison–clear, clearer, clearest. The divine does not impart itself to the human. The latter is subject to the laws of human thought and development. Growth may be hindered; it cannot be hastened. As in the plant life the same law prevails–first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear–so in all human growth and development. And to this law our Lord in His human nature was subject. Hence the human choice could not be made until there was a complete *consciousness* of the will of the Father; and the consciousness had to ripen into full *realization* and then the *choice,* full and free, was

possible. Such is the human process in general; such it must have been in our Lord. "In all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren." On the holy mount the consciousness was enlarged, the vision perfect, and that all-decisive, world-saving choice was the immediate and spontaneous result.

It was this holy act of choosing according to the will of the Father which set its mark upon all His remaining days until the end. Luke 9:51 states that "He *steadfastly* set his face to go to Jerusalem." "Steadfastly" is the word which became the *keynote* of all that followed. He never wavered. He never said again to Peter nor to any one else, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" All the way through we see Him in the deep calm and repose of victory. Victorious He was, even though the conflict was not ended. Temptation followed temptation. The Prince of this world never left Him at rest. The nearer the end, the shorter the time that remained, the fiercer became the conflict, the more determined on Satan's part the effort to overcome and destroy Him. And it never ended until He cried out, "It is finished."

It was always the same antithesis, so masterly used by Satan, of spirit and flesh, even in the holy Lord Jesus. All the way through He denied Himself, His holy self; no unholy self had He to deny. Invariably He silenced the shrinking fears of His sensitive human nature with the determined attitude of His unflinching spirit always to please the Father and to drink the cup the Father had given Him.

The Twofold Effect of Realization

In this conflict the realization experienced on the mount never left Him, so thoroughly was the impression burned in upon His soul. The effect was twofold. To His

Human *nature* it became more and more cause of fear, dismay, and darkest foreboding. This is always the case. The more vivid our realization of the approaching ordeal, the greater the stress and strain on our part if possible to escape it. And our Lord was not an exception. The vivid representation of all that the cup contained, both of suffering mental and physical, and of the immeasurable responsibility, was at times overwhelming. This accounts for Luke 12:50: "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened" (the same word as in Paul's words, "The love of Christ *constraineth* me," and in Philippians 1:22, "I am in a strait betwixt two,") "till it be accomplished." In the Garden He gave literal expression to it: "My Father, if it be possible," etc. To *His Person*, His Ego, however, it became more and more the rich source of highest animation and inspiration. He had been on the mountain top. Like Moses on Pisgah He had seen the Promised Land in *all* its breadth and length, and the promise had been repeated of full and perpetual possession; and that so inspired Him, that like Joshua,[8] He could brave Jordan, although in His case all the waves and billows of that angry torrent must go over His head, and He meet and overcome the foe that sought His destruction. It was on the mountain top that the joy was set before Him for the sake of which He endured the cross and despised the shame (Heb. 12:2).

IV. *The Father's Approval*

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35).

The approval of the Father came at the close of the scene. A bright cloud overshadowed them (those in glory) and received them out of their sight. At the same moment a Voice came out of the cloud saying, "This is my beloved Son . . . hear ye him."

This was the Father's approval of our Lord's act of obedience in the holy mount. With what love and extreme delight did the Father look upon Him in that moment of Self-humbling, when He became obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Though *officially* our Lord was the antitype of the sin offering with all that pertained to it, *personally* He was the antitype of the burnt offering which was at all times "of a sweet savour unto Jehovah" (Lev. 1:13).

And this supreme act of loyalty to God was to the Father such cause of delight because in the God-man it was the human nature, the Son of Man, who rendered it. Man had never so pleased God. He had never so entirely, so completely surrendered himself to God. In this surrender of the Son of Man there was no defeat; it was complete, perfect, and therefore the Father could unreservedly approve the act, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

The eternal Son had always been the Father's delight (Prov. 8:30). As such He needed not the Father's special approval. The divine sanction had reference to the act of the Son of Man. Man had never so pleased God. Even the saintliest among Old Testament believers were after all sinners saved by grace, whose works were always defiled by sin, always in need of cleansing and atoning blood. Not one had offered himself to God so completely, so perfectly as this Man in the holy mount. And as such He was the archetype of what His redeemed people, His Body, the Church would be, and what in them He would accomplish, throughout the ages of their sojourn in the earth–when they too would choose to leave the mountain top of fellowship of saints at home, and, not loving their lives to the death, would go to the uttermost parts of the earth to proclaim the testimony of Jesus.

God loves man, His image-bearer, in whose creation

He concentrated all His power and wisdom and exhausted all the resources of heaven and earth, to bring forth the crown and glory, the "chef-d'oeuvre" of all His creative acts. It was with God-like sorrow, speaking in human fashion, that God beheld man's fall, degradation and utter ruin by sin. "It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (Gen. 6:6). And now, here in the holy mount He beheld Him, the last Adam, in union with the Eternal Son, the Son of Man, of holy birth, of spotless life, in complete Self-abnegation and Self-surrender, *constrained by love,* effacing voluntarily the glory of transfiguration, which was the effect and reward of His holiness, humbling Himself unto death, yea, the death of the cross, and choosing to accomplish His decease at Jerusalem. With Godlike joy did the Father there approve the choice of the Son of Man, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The Unity of Revelation

Part of the Father's approval is the command, "Hear ye him." This command is addressed primarily to the disciples, the eyewitnesses of His glory, and through them to the Church of the ages. And here again the interpretation of the command must be according to the analogy of faith.

There is an implied antithesis in the command. The antithesis is not between Christ and Moses and Elias, but between Christ and Peter. It is unworthy of our Lord to represent Him as opposing Moses-Elias, i.e., the Old Testament revelation to Himself, who is the Center and Circumference of all the divine revelation. Christ came not to oppose but to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. This needs emphasizing these days. The content of the Old Testament material is just as

much a divine revelation as that of the New. As to the *record* of that material, it is inspired by the same Spirit who inspired the New Testament. Inspiration is the same in both. We do not recognize any degree in inspiration. The record is either inspired or not inspired. Partly inspired is *not* inspired. It is either God-inbreathed (*theopneustos,* II Tim. 3:16) or man-inbreathed. And the two do not mix. If you tell me that the Old Testament is only partly inspired, then to me it has lost its authority as a divine revelation. There is a difference of method, which is that of dispensation, but the inspiration is the same. Hence in the divine command, "Hear ye him" the implied antithesis is not between Christ and Moses, but between Christ and Peter.

The Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of Peter

We have already discovered that Peter was a discordant tone in the heavenly music of the transfiguration. He spoke from the spirit of the sinful flesh, Christ altogether from the holy flesh. The former says: "Glory and no cross; translation, no death; a tabernacling in the holy mount, no descent to the plain where the demoniac is filling the air with imprecations." Such is the spirit of the flesh which, however religious, is enmity against God, which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; and to be carnally minded is death (Rom. 8:6,7). The opposite is the Son of Man in holy choice, effacing the glory, going down the mount, healing the demon possessed one who was a type of the demon-ruled world which shall crucify Him, and by His crucifixion and death He will save. He purposed not to fulfill the desires of the flesh, even of the holy flesh, but to testify by word and deed, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Such is our Lord's act and example in the holy mount. With reference to this the Father's command to you and me is: "Hear ye him."

Suffering and Superior Glory

In the holy mount we see the contrast between suffering and glory. The glory is manifested in the transfigured Son of Man. Moses and Elias talking about His decease at Jerusalem means suffering. After the glory was departed Jesus charged His disciples that they should tell no man what things they had seen till the Son of Man were risen from the dead (Mark 9:9). And why were they not to tell? Because it was only after the resurrection that they would be able to see the relation between suffering and glory; for then He showed them that it behooved Christ to suffer those things and to enter into His glory. Peter recalled this scene shortly before his own decease (exodus), the same word used by Moses and Elias in the holy mount. He, too, could not enter the glory but through suffering. Neither could Paul nor any of the holy apostles, nor can any of the members of His Body.

And we also find that through the suffering comes a *superior* glory. The transfiguration in connection with the resurrection and ascension speaks of two kinds of glory. The glory of the transfiguration is *like* that of the sun; the glory which Paul beheld on the way to Damascus of which he speaks before King Agrippa was *above* the brightness of the sun (Acts 26:13).

Calvin says: "The Transfiguration did not altogether enable His disciples to see Christ, as He is now in heaven, but gave them a taste of His boundless glory, such as they were able to comprehend. Then His Face shone as the sun; but now He is far beyond the sun in brightness. In His raiment an unusual and dazzling whiteness appeared; but now without raiment a Divine majesty shines in His whole body. There is no necessity for entering here into ingenious inquiries as to the whiteness of His garments, or the brightness of His countenance, for this was not a complete exhibition of the

heavenly glory of Christ, but, under symbols which were adapted to the capacity of the flesh, He enabled them to taste in part what could not be fully comprehended" (Calvin, Commentary on Matthew, II, 310).

In Philippians 2:9 we read: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is *above* every name." And in Revelation 3:21: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my father in his throne." Would our Lord have shared His Father's throne if He had not overcome, if in the transfiguration, overcome by the temptation, He had chosen the outgoing from the holy mount? We think not. And notice, that to the overcomer He promises a place in His *own* throne, while He Himself possesses the superior glory of the *Father's* throne. In the description of the glory at the Father's right hand by Paul (Eph. 1:21-23) our Lord is called the Head of the Church which is His body; and the Church is spoken of as the *pleroma* (fullness) of Him that filleth all in all. Hence the Church is to Him the very *pleroma* of glory, because He purchased it with His own blood.

The other glory, that of the transfiguration, is not *above* but *as* the brightness of the sun; hence, glory not like that of the Mediator but of the Son of Man. Thinking of Him for a moment as such, apart from His eternal love, not seeking us, the sinful and lost, but thinking of Himself only and of His escape from the decease at Jerusalem–what do we see? The Son of Man, pure, holy, spotless, deathless and incorruptible, but still the Son of Man. But taking Him as He is, "baptized in the stream of eternal compassion and love of Redemption" (Kuyper)–what do we see? The Man Jesus Christ the Mediator between God and Man, the Redeemer of the world. The choice was between the glory of Man, and that of the Redeemer. If He had chosen the former we would have lost Him and–He would have lost us.

What *was* the secret of our Lord's victory in the holy mount? Luke introduces the transfiguration scene with the words: "He went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered and his raiment was white and glistening" (9:28,29). From this we learn that the transfiguration originated in prayer, i.e., in fellowship with God, and therefore must have been continued and ended in such fellowship. In all the transfiguration, throughout all the conflict of temptation, throughout every phase of the mental and spiritual process, our Lord was in unbroken fellowship with the Father by the unobstructed operation of the Holy Spirit. Not for a moment was His mind diverted from the Father. His every thought was God-inbreathed. In loving embrace with the Father He traveled step by step through the whole of this sublime experience and transaction. Every suggestion of His fleshly nature was transparent to the Father's eye, consciously held up by Him for the Father's scrutiny. There was but one desire throughout, but one determination which nothing could shake or alter, and that was to do the Father's will and to finish His work. From moment to moment He stood in conscious, harmonious relation with God. His similarity of feeling, of desire, of love, and of purpose with the Father was perfect. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son"; and the Son loved us and gave Himself to us; and having loved His own He loved them to the end. Hence there was victory.

We speak of conflict and there was conflict, sharp and profound–but not for a moment between the Father and Himself. In the midst of the conflict He rested on the Father's bosom. The conflict could not affect the conscious, harmonious relation with the Father. Nothing could affect that relation. Even in the midst of the desolation and forsakenness of Calvary it remained

consciously harmonious. So it was all through the transfiguration. The stern demand to accomplish His decease at Jerusalem did not disturb it. With joy His love rose up with Him saying, "Lo! I come to do thy will, O God."

In viewing the enlarged horizon which presented itself to His eye in the transfiguration, He was consciously led by the Father. A panoramic representation of the Father's eternal plan and purpose passed before His comprehensive vision; and it was the Father's interpretation of every particular from beginning to end. Hence our Lord could not be mistaken when to His disciples He unfolded the future. He always beheld things in their true perspective and therefore could assign to each detail its proper place and importance. Hence the impression which He received was always correct and needed no modification, and its effect was absolute. And all this and much more was the immediate result of His unbroken fellowship with the Father in whose light He saw light. The holy choice made in the transfiguration was the necessary and logical outcome of His ever conscious, harmonious relation with the Father.

And so there was victory. Evil could not touch Him. Defeat therefore was impossible. The presence of evil caused Him to take shelter more closely in the Father's bosom. Our Lord's life was victorious because of His unbroken fellowship with the Father, and that is the lesson for each of us. We, too, shall know the victorious life if we abide in Him, our Lord, our Saviour, and our Example.

Transfiguration and Parousia

From Second Peter 1:16,17, we learn that the transfiguration is typical of the second coming of our

Lord.[9] A type is divinely ordained, otherwise it is no type. It may therefore be called a visible prophecy; and as such must find its fulfilling in its antitype. Hence it is instructive to look at the transfiguration also from this aspect.

Peter writes: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the *power* and *coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In these words the apostle clearly connects the transfiguration with the parousia. That he denotes the second coming of the Lord and not the first, is very clear. The consensus of opinion among commentators confirms this interpretation. Says Meyer: "The apostle regards the transfiguration-glory of Christ as a type—and therefore a proof—of the glory of Christ at His Parousia."

In the transfiguration we see therefore a miniature picture of what we shall behold in the day of His return. On the mount He was seen in *honor* and glory: *honor* when the Father approved of His act in the transfiguration, and *glory* in the transfiguration of His humanity. And that was the type, the visible prophecy of the higher honor and glory which He shall receive of the Father in the parousia. For then there shall be given to Him the Kingdom, of which as the Son of Man He is the rightful Heir for God hath made Him the Heir of all things, and the glory of being crowned with many crowns, King of kings and Lord of lords. Then He shall assume dominion over all the earth, all things being put down under His feet. And as the antitype always exceeds the type, so shall the honor and glory of the parousia far exceed that of the transfiguration, even as His own merit as the transfigured Christ is exceeded by that of

the Christ crucified, risen, ascended, and glorified and exalted at the Father's right hand, having received a Name which is above every name.

And the transfiguration is typical not only of His own exaltation in the parousia as the Head over all things but also of the glorification of the Church, His Body. In Moses and Elias we see the representatives of the redeemed of the Old Testament, even as the three disciples represent the redeemed of the New Testament dispensation. And again, as in the parousia we shall see saints risen from the dead and saints transfigured and translated, so we conclude that in Moses and Elias we see the representatives of both these classes. And we might go into other details, but enough has been said to show the importance of the transfiguration in this respect. God the Father has given to the church of all ages for her comfort and encouragement in the midst of her tribulation and crossbearing, a picture, a glorious premonstration of that great and illustrious event, still in the future, of which all that preceded is but preparation, and of which it shall be the climax and consummation. The incarnation leads up to the transfiguration, the transformation to Calvary, to the resurrection and ascension. And as the disciples were still gazing upward, the two men in white said unto them: "This same Jesus, which was received up into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." From the incarnation to Calvary we witness His humiliation, ever deeper down into the valley of gloom, death and sheol; with the resurrection begins His exaltation, higher and higher in honor and glory, with a Name which is above every name, until in the parousia we see Him invested with universal dominion, from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth, when kings shall fall down before Him, and all nations will serve Him. Hence the parousia is the indispensable and logical outcome of the transfiguration.

May the study of the transfiguration have this blessed effect that when He shall appear we may be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of Man (Luke 21:36).

1 *Although the object of these lectures is exegetical and devotional, yet for the sake of inquiring minds we add the following: "Many who deny the Virgin Birth do so because they deny altogether the miraculous and supernatural elements in both the Old Testament and the New. Others do so because Matthew 1 and Luke 1, the chapters which contain the narratives of our Lord's holy Conception, are rejected by many of the higher critics as not genuine and authentic. And these narratives are the only sources of all our knowledge regarding this great and vital matter. If these narratives do not belong to the Gospels but are an invention and addition of the Post-Apostolic period, then we are completely in the dark as to how our Lord entered into this world. Hence the question regarding the genuineness and authenticity of these two passages and the chapters containing them is of the highest importance."

Dr. James Orr has given us a very clear, concise, and yet comprehensive statement of the facts in the case, in his excellent little book, THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST. From chapter 2 we learn the following:

"It is almost a vital point for the opponents to disprove the original and authentative character of these passages. Can this be done? I am here to affirm with some confidence that it cannot. These chapters containing the narratives of the Virgin Birth are attested by all available evidence as indubitably genuine parts of their respective Gospels."

The first source of evidence which furnishes us with the necessary proof in all such cases is the manuscript of the New Testament. "It is here to be remembered that the wealth of manuscript authority for the Gospels as for the New Testament generally is without parallel in literature. The Greek New Testament Manuscripts by far outnumber the manuscripts of the ancient Greek Classics. Of Sophocles, for instance, there is probably but one copy in existence of the eighth or ninth century, while the Manuscripts of the Gospels, whole or in parts, are reckoned by scores, and including the Cursives by hundreds; and some of these, as is wellknown, are of great age and authority." Another chief source of evidence is "Versions," to which have to be added "Quotations," from the writings especially of the Ante-Nicene Fathers.

The net result of the application of these tests in the present case can be readily stated. "Is there a single unmutilated manuscript of the Gospel—older or younger—from which these chapters in Matthew and Luke are absent? Not one. Are these sections absent from any of the versions? So far as our evidence goes—No."

"While from some of the oldest Uncials some passages are absent, as Mark 16:9 and John 7:53-8:11 (see reference in Revised Version), the two opening chapters of Matthew and Luke are found in all the oldest Uncials with the exception of the Alexandria Codex, which is mutilated down as far as Matthew 25, but Luke 1 and 2 are there, as well as in all the Uncials and Cursives."

The earliest versions or translations of which are the Syrian, the Peshito, and the Latin, belong to the second half of the second century; the Ethiopian and the Coptic belong to the third and fifth centuries; and these all contain the same testimony. These chapters of Matthew and Luke are as little absent from these versions as they are from the Greek manuscripts.

"Other sources of evidences yield the same result. That famous old Syrian Harmony of the Four Gospels made by Tatian 100 or 170 A.D.—the Diatesseron—the first attempt to harmonize the four Gospels—contains these chapters. Then we have the quotations and allusions in Justin Martyr, Tatian's master, which show that these chapters were in the Gospels or 'Memoirs of the Apostles' which he tells us were read week by week in the assemblies of the Christians.

Even the Epicurean Celsus, the bitter heathen opponent of Christianity in the second century, draws freely in his attacks on the Gospels from the incidents in the birth narratives, the genealogies, the star in the East, the flight into Egypt, the Virgin-Birth itself."

"I have thus surveyed," continues Dr. Orr, "the field of Manuscripts and Versions and I have sought to show you how absolutely unbroken is the phalanx of evidence that these first chapters of Matthew and Luke are genuine parts of the Gospels in which they are found. Well, but I have no doubt you are long ere this asking in surprise: If the facts are thus undeniable, what do the objectors say to them? How are they dealt with? One characteristic example of how they are dealt with may perhaps suffice. Here are two recent publications of the great Old Testament critic Wellhausen—"The Gospel of Matthew, Translated and Explained," and "The Gospel of Luke, Translated and Explained." I take up his version of Matthew and what do I find? It begins with chapter 3:1. What has become of the first two chapters? They are simply dropped out. For what reason? There is not a word or note or comment to explain. The critic thinks they should not be there, so Manuscripts and Versions notwithstanding, out they go. It is the same with the Gospel of Luke. It is no doubt easy enough to get rid of the evidence for the Virgin-Birth in this way. But is it scientific? Is it right? Would a similar treatment be tolerated by any classical work?"

2 *In the Greek it reads: "bloods," i.e., male and female.

3 *"The distinction between nature and person. Nature or substance (ousia) denotes the totality of powers and qualities which constitutes a being; while person (hupostatis, prosopion) is the Ego, the self-conscious, self-asserting, and acting subject."

4 *The modern sense of the word "deification" widely differs from that wherein the early Church fathers used it. They derived it from the Greek Mysteries, but with a significance of its own, viz., exemption from death. God (Theos) being immortal, the gift of immortality is itself a deification. (See Workman, Christian Thought, p. 30.) The modern idea is: The act of endowing with divine existence or attributes (Standard Dictionary). In other words, identification with God.

5 *However, according to Kuyper, Aquinas in the above quotation, only cites the opinions of others, and then states his own opinion in these words: "Some answer this question affirmatively, others, negatively. I rather side with the latter." And then he proceeds mercilessly to disprove the arguments of Duns Scotus.

6 *Leviticus 27:28, 29.

7 *This position has been questioned by some whose judgment we value. It was objected, "The incitement of Christ's adopted nature did indeed create desire but only to receive in God's way the things which His nature craved. But it was desire, and to desire bread when hungry is no sin." To this we reply that we quite agree

with our brother to some extent. How could Christ desire to receive anything in any other way but God's way? But since it must have been quite clear to our Lord that at that hour it was not God's way for Him to have bread, He could not desire it. It was not the Father who offered Him bread; therefore it was the Father who withheld bread. And to desire what the Father withheld would have been opposition to the Father's will. Our Lord knew that His Father would not test Him beyond measure. He so completely trusted God in due time to supply His need, that the desire was not even found. To desire readily becomes anticipation, i.e., to take beforehand. Sin usually anticipates. On the contrary, "he that believeth shall not make haste," not anticipate even by desire.

8 *Moses and Joshua in their duality are the type of Christ.

9 *Note: The historical setting of the transfiguration, which is the same in the synoptic Gospels, induces us to think that the Lord meant His transfiguration to be a prefiguration of the Parousia. The things which shall occur in the Parousia, therefore, may assist us in the interpretation of the transfiguration.

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